

**Racial identity in educational practices in the context of  
Colombia**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the relationship between race and education in Colombia. The study focuses on teachers' perceptions of racial identities and educational practices. Through conceptualising educational practice at a multi-level approach of macro (policies and curriculum), meso (media) and micro levels (teaching practice), the study explores how (racial) discourses and practices at these levels may come to affect teachers' understanding of racial identities and how this may be manifested in their understanding of teaching practices. An empirical approach based on interviews with sixteen state school teachers in the city of Bogota is used to analyse teachers' experiences and ideas on issues of race and education.

The study contributes to the field of education in Colombia by introducing the discussion of race which, up to now, has been underexplored. More specifically, this study identifies through critical discourse analysis how teachers make sense of dominant racial structures and how their understandings bear on their perceptions of educational practices. The analysis of these issues draws on a powerful theoretical framework which combines insights from critical race theory (CRT), whiteness and postcolonialism. CRT and Whiteness, in particular, seek to explore how racial identities are structurally constituted while postcolonialism facilitates the critical interrogation of constructions of those identities in relation to colonial historical events. This approach is very innovative, as CRT and Whiteness Studies have rarely been applied to explore educational issues in Colombia. It is argued that racist discourses in Colombia tend to be reproduced through educational practices since racist structures maintain power relations and those relations shape teachers' views.

The findings strongly suggest that whiteness-centred discourses present in public policies and in the media, seem to impact on teachers' perspectives of racial identities and on educational practices. In relation to policy, this appears to be the case firstly because policies are usually imposed rather than discussed and this leads teachers to accept policy demands as regimes of truth; and secondly because whiteness involves a dysconscious racism that obscures the power relations in asymmetric relations. Furthermore, racial structures (namely whiteness) also appear to shape teachers' educational practices by producing discriminatory practices towards students and

teachers themselves. More particularly, in the construction of racial identities, the findings suggest that white privilege is present in teachers' self-identifications and that this privilege produces exclusionary practices. Consequently, white privilege appears to affect teachers' views of racial identities and leads them to essentialise identities as fixed and unchangeable. These essentialisations also reflect discriminatory and exclusionary practices which also shape educational practices.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### **Origins of this research: my personal journey**

This study explores the relationship between race and education in Colombia. It is concerned with teachers' perspectives of two aspects: how educational practices may have played a role in shaping the 'racial'<sup>1</sup> identity(ies)<sup>2</sup> of Colombian people and the impact of racial identities on educational practices. Before I further delve into the nature of this study, I would like to start by sharing a short personal account that shows how I started to make sense of this as my research proposal<sup>3</sup>. The specific case of the story here seeks to do both, indicate my position in the field of discussion as well as to "cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises" of race (R. Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 41).

As a Colombian citizen born in Bogota and whose parents were from quite different regions of the country, I grew up in a very diverse cultural environment in which regional traditions were mixed. From my childhood, I have some recollections of what discrimination and racism were like. These memories come mainly from aggressive scenes of American movies in which these issues seemed to be chiefly a problem affecting black people. However, from my more immediate context I also remember multiple occasions in which people used to tell jokes making fun of black people and laughing while they pointed at each other saying, "That was so racist!" I grew up feeling that those attitudes were normal despite their incorrectness. Anyhow, we felt that 'we were not racist'.

It was only until recently that I realised that I had never thought about indigenous people in the country as a living culture. They were rather invisible to me. I had constructed a frozen idea of them considering how they were presented to me at school.

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<sup>1</sup> Concepts such as 'race' and 'racial' identity are sometimes included in quotations to underline my ontological position in understanding the notion as a social construction. This decision is of more relevance in an interpretivist study like this because it attempts to avoid the reification of the term which has already been criticised in sociological studies. For further understanding, see the definition of race in chapter 3.

<sup>2</sup> Racial identity (ies) when referring to the context of Colombia is used in plural-singular in order to highlight its ambivalence particular to the practices in the country alongside with national identity.

<sup>3</sup> Personal accounts are ways to voice a view which does not necessarily reflect the one of the majority (R. Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). They have been widely used in recent research to show the positionality of the researcher and to avoid attempts to claim overarching scientific truths (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, 2012).

I mostly associated them with rudimentary, precarious and outdated lifestyles. Those ideas were complemented with popular comments in which the term ‘indigenous’ was used with a negative connotation to refer to individuals that were ill-mannered, superstitious or even criminal. Even though I was taught about indigenous people as my ancestors, I naively thought of myself as not connected with these groups. My classmates and I were ‘*mestizos*<sup>4</sup>’. That was the common thing. And when defining our ‘race’, we were ‘white’ or ‘whitey’. I never reflected about those ideas, I just took them for granted.

When I started my professional career, I decided to be a teacher of English. This choice increased my ambition to travel abroad to improve my second language. That was why I decided to travel to the USA. It was the first time I started to reflect on my ethnicity seriously. Once I was there, I realised I was not as white as I thought; I was dark in the eyes of Americans! This idea was reinforced as I found myself filling out forms that required me to select my ethnicity, and white was a category different from Latin American where I might feel better identified. My curiosity about this increased when I realised that my description also meant that attached to my background and ethnicity there were boundaries to things I could have access to. Although I could not clearly understand these boundaries I could feel their consequences were very real. Because of my Colombian passport, to be able to travel to the USA was rather more difficult than it was for other people. Likewise, applying for an American university also implied economic conditions that I found incredibly hard to achieve bearing in mind the income that I, as a regular person in my country could receive. I found that as a Latin American or Colombian, there were three options according to people’s advice: a scholarship, an incredible amount of money or an American Nationality. “Get an American husband”, some said jokingly and some others quite seriously. It was a frustrating situation that led me to go back home to think of other alternatives to study abroad.

After my return, I kept on my ‘normal’ life; working as teacher of English, teaching people that travelling abroad was important and that learning English was a way to achieve it. As a language teacher, I frequently found myself reflecting upon the relationship between language and culture. This reflection initially led me to focus on teaching my students ‘the correct way’ to behave in interactions with foreigners. Coincidentally, in doing so, I also became interested in critical pedagogy in which local realities and education for social justice put into question what I thought was ‘the

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<sup>4</sup> Mixed-race

correct way'. At the same time, my familiarity with critical pedagogy also led me to critically reflect upon national education policies that appeared to pull in different directions: some discussed the relevance of being intercultural, and others demanded to recognise our local pluri-culturality in curricular development and practice. I found suspicious that the inter-culturality referred to in these education policies tended to overemphasise foreign over local cultures. The lack of clarity in the discussion of pluri-culturality also prevented the educational community from fully understanding the processes that it implies. The ideas involved in this lack of clarity may cause social conflict as they can generate discrimination, reinforce inequality and challenge social justice.

These lived experiences have a common thread: all of them have to do with identity and social relationships. Some ideas about collectives in society are formed based on their place of origin, skin colour, nationality, culture and language or political reasons (Weedon, 2004). As illustrated above, Colombian educational policies tend to play down the issues of discrimination in educational policies and practice. In this vein, discrimination in the education field has not really been a matter of research in Colombia. More specifically, the study of race in connection with education has been an underexplored area. In planning my doctoral studies, I decided to examine these issues in depth by focusing on the role of educational practices in the construction of people's sense of who they are as Colombians.

## **Description of the empirical study**

This is a qualitative study based on interviews. I carried out field work based on in-depth interviews with sixteen teachers of various secondary state schools in Bogota-Colombia. The data collected was the basis to develop critical discourse analysis which in combination with CRT, whiteness and postcolonialism worked to make sense of teachers' ideas. Following the interpretive nature of this study, through this methodology, the study attempted to reach understanding of teachers' perceptions of race and educational practices. The way the fieldwork was developed is explained in chapter five in more detail.

## **Contribution to knowledge**

The study shows that even though discrimination and race is thought to be unimportant in the context of Colombia, teachers' perceptions suggest that this is not necessarily the case. By analysing teachers' educational practices from a multi-level perspective and employing an innovative theoretical framework that foregrounds race and racial structures, dominant racist discourses are shown to be of significance to shape teachers' ideas. This theoretical framework suggests that master narratives of whiteness permeate education at all levels (teaching practices, policies and media) shaping the views teachers in this study have on racial identities. Complementarily, teachers' views suggest that ideas of racial identities are shaped in uneven relations which reproduce and have an impact on their teaching practice. The thesis attempts to raise awareness of mechanisms, practices and discourses that shape education in a racist system which teachers and the whole community need to be more aware of. Studies of race and education in Colombia appear to be very limited and only a few of them have focused on historical accounts of the colony or more recent studies only focused on ethno-education (see chapter 2). The final goal of this research is to bring to the fore the problems that are embedded in racial structures shaping education and to visualise ways in which those structures could be tackled to propose alternatives for social transformation. Educational practices in Colombia have been seen in relation to wider social aspects but race is not part of those relations that have been analysed.

## **Outline of the study**

This study investigates how Colombian racial identity(ies) is configured in teachers' discourses and experiences of educational practice. My inquiry does not assume that teachers are the only actors developing education; it includes them as part of a network with other actors (i.e. media and public policies) with whom teachers negotiate meanings that are mediated by power relations. This implies that educational practices cannot be reduced to what teachers do in the classroom. In fact, an important premise underlying this study is that educational practices can be described as institutionalised and public pedagogies (Giroux, 2011). The former has to do with traditional conceptions of practice that take place in formal settings (e.g. school) through formal procedures (teaching). The latter refers to cultural pedagogies (e.g. TV, newspaper, and social media) that contribute to teachers' educational practice directly or indirectly. Hence, in this study the role of media, as one of the actors of educational practice, may be highly influential in the construction of racial identities. As suggested in my story,

for instance, my idea that racism was an issue that affected only black people derived from the movies I had seen.

Equally, and as also related to my story, teachers have to deal with education policies that often address issues of race, identity and inequality either superficially or contradictorily. In turn, those policies are assumed as mandates rather than advice (Bowles, 1981). As policies are supposed to exert a strong influence in ways teachers shape their practices (Ball, Maguire, Braun, & Hoskins, 2011), this study takes that as a second major factor to be considered. I argue throughout this study that, reinforced by globalisation, education in Colombia has become oriented towards the accomplishment of standards determined by models and policies of international organisations such as the Organisation for the Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). This is something that has been criticised by scholars such as Leonardo (2002); Banks (2002); and J. King (1991) as being part of whiteness-centred discourses (see chapter 2 for further discussion). These models and policies appear to influence the configuration of national racial identities through educational practices that are expected to keep up with the developments of other nations –especially Western nations. This eagerness to follow other countries seems to be at odds with the goals of education that foster the racial identity of Colombia emphasising local pluri-culturality as has been established in the National Constitution (Colombia, 1991). Teachers therefore face tensions when trying to define their educational practices: on the one hand, teachers have been called to follow education policies that are highly influenced by whiteness-centred discourses. On the other hand, they are also supposed to consider educational policies that emphasise the need to work towards the local pluri-cultural and multi-ethnic racial identity of Colombia. The understanding of power relations among teachers, media and policies leads towards highlighting how educational practices are means to negotiate with ideas created around certain social, economic and ethnic groups.

## **Aims and research questions**

This study investigates the relationship between race and education in Colombia. Research has only recently been concerned with exploring topics such as the inclusion of Afro-Colombians and indigenous minorities in educational practices (e.g. Artunduaga, 1997; Ortiz & Guzmán, 2008; Suárez, 2009). Taking a different perspective, this study analyses how whiteness, as a discriminatory practice (Bonnett, 2000; Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2004; Sleeter, 2004), is embedded in the general

constructions of racial identity derived from teachers' educational practices. This research also recognises that Colombian society's 'racial' interchange and the internal processes of assimilation, is so 'racially' mixed that it is difficult to use traditional racial categories (white, black, etc.). In this vein, I employ the work of Koopman (2012), who argues that separate 'racial' groups no longer clearly exist in Colombia. However, a hierarchy of skin tone still operates, with paler skins regarded as superior, and white as most privileged not only physically but mainly, culturally (Middleton, 2008).

As a Colombian professional educator and researcher, I am interested in understanding the relationship between several components involved in the complexity of teachers' educational practices and how those practices also contribute to impacting on individuals' identities. Through doing this, this research attempts to identify underlying racialised values (i.e. values associated with the idea of race) in decision making and perceptions of educational practices that may have an impact on teachers' constructions of racial identity. In doing so, the study aims to contribute in explaining how educational practices have played a role in shaping the racial identity of the country and how different racial discourses shape educational practices. In turn, it also aims to contribute to raising awareness of the existence of discriminatory practices in education that have not hitherto been fully appreciated in the Colombian context.

In order to reach the goals of this thesis, the following main research question is addressed:

How is Colombian racial identity constructed in teachers' understandings of educational practice?

And the related questions are:

1. What are state school teachers' perceptions of Colombian racial identity(ies)?
2. How do power relations in discourses of educational practice impact teachers' construction of racial identity(ies)?
3. How do state school teachers' perceptions of Colombian racial identity shape their educational practice?

## Context of research

This research was carried out in the context of Bogota-Colombia. The city is divided into six socio-economic strata (recognised in numbers 1-6) where one and two are the lowest class and five and six are considered high class. 76% of the population is classified in the 1-3 strata (Bogotá, 2004) which indicates that the majority are working and middle class.

Although Bogota has been one of the most ‘ethnically/racially’ diverse and advanced cities in the country, information about that diversity has typically been explained in terms of the single category of *mestizaje*. Little data is displayed openly to show the degree of diversity in ‘racial’ communities. More specifically the data about ‘ethnic/racial’ diversity in schools is unknown. Since the information is vital for the focus of this research, I will provide an overview of the ‘racial’ features that characterise both the inhabitants of the city and the educational context of the participants involved in this study.

### Migratory movements: forming the city

Bogota was estimated to have 7.980.001 inhabitants in 2016. The total population of Colombia is estimated at 47.202.617 and 20% of inhabitants are considered to be internal migrants (from different regions of the country). Even though there has been a high number of ‘displacements<sup>5</sup>’ registered in Bogota lately, the information from the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) shows that the population migrating to Bogotá has slightly decreased. Even though migration is quite active, there are not massive ‘racial’ movements that change the demography of minorities in the city substantially.

After the national constitution of 1991 in which pluri-culturality was included as a descriptor of national identity (see chapter 2), the ‘race’ category started to appear in the census under the name of ‘ethnicities’. In light of this, the census (2005) included a new item: self-categorisation which gave new information as compared to the previous 1993 census.

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<sup>5</sup> Displacement is the name given to the forced movement that some people have had to face from certain territories in Colombia as a result of violence or the territorial exchange with multinationals. This situation causes these population to leave their production activity. Poor populations generally from rural areas have been the most affected forcing them to migrate to the cities. As reported by Hooker (2003) and others, ethnic minorities are usually part of these displacements.

## **Bogota: race and education**

The results of the 2005 census showed that in Bogota 0.23% of the population were indigenous, 0.01% were Roma communities and 1.49% were Afro-Colombians while 98.27% were classified as ‘without ethnic belonging’. As suggested, Bogota is a city where the census does not show high levels of people who are said to belong to ethnic groups. This is contrasted with other regions in which the percentage of ethnic groups is shown to be high. For instance, in the whole region of Choco 82.12% of the population is self-identified as Afro-Colombian and in Vaupes 66.65% of inhabitants are self-identified as indigenous. Those regions also represent the areas where the poverty of the country is still primarily concentrated. So, this brings the role of pluri-culturality into the arena of equality in the country. This is also obviously a concern of mine in my role as an educator who is inspired by the ideals of critical pedagogy.

M. Delgado (2014) reports at the national level that even though the constitution of 1991 has increased access to education to ethnic communities, there is still a big social gap between ethnic communities and the majority in terms of assistance and quality. For instance, she explains that Afro-Colombians as well as indigenous communities show a high level of illiteracy compared with those in the majority. 7.4% in ‘no ethnic’ population while 11.2% in Afro-Colombians and 28.6% in indigenous populations. Other documents present more specific information about education in Bogota such as students drop off or coverage (Alcaldia-de-Bogota, 2016) but, information regarding ‘race’ is not statistically reported.

## **The School system in Bogota**

Schools in Bogota are broadly divided into state and private schools. The first group differs from the last category in terms of the autonomy they have to develop curriculum proposals. While private schools develop their own educational proposals regardless of the guidelines provided by the Ministry of Education, the state schools usually adapt to those guidelines.

Furthermore, the school system in general is divided into basic education (which starts in primary school and ends in 9th grade in secondary school) and “*media*”<sup>6</sup> education

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<sup>6</sup> The term used in Spanish



(10th and 11th grade). However, teachers are typically classified as primary or secondary teachers. There are no teachers specialising in the middle (*media*) stage.

With regards to state schools, where the participants in this study are located, it is worth noting that they cover the majority of education in the country. In their infrastructure, these schools depend on government finances totally or partially. This factor situates state schools as disadvantaged since the government funding must be shared across a huge number of schools. A case which is different from private education because they just depend on their own produced income.

### **State schools and race affairs**

The schools in which the participants of this study belong are all part of state education in Bogotá. A high percentage of the students in state education come from strata 1, 2 and 3 (Alcaldia-de-Bogota, 2016). As previously stated these schools are regulated by the National Ministry of Education but they are also controlled by Local Authorities for education called “Secretariats of Education” (Secretarias de educación). The Secretariat of Education of Bogota (SE) works similarly to other SE of different regions of the country. However, they are all independent and autonomous financially and managerially. For their part, the Ministry of Education launches curriculum proposals, which lately have also included materials and teacher training for those schools. These proposals are applied to state schools, and the SE are the entities responsible for controlling and supervising education quality. SE also develop educational programs and initiatives that are either adopted or adapted by the institutions (MEN, 2009).

The SE of Bogota recently opened an office called the ‘*Direction of inclusion and integration of populations*’. The main area of work of this office is to foster diversity. This diversity involves ethnicity in relation to the *policy of inclusion* named in chapter 2. This entity sets out as a main objective “to deal with differential education drawing on human rights to promote education models that work for different needs, conditions and situations of children and adolescents”<sup>7</sup>. This branch has been created with the ideal of “working for eliminating physical, pedagogical and attitudinal barriers while diversity is taken as an element that can enrich human development” (Secretaria-de-Educacion, 2017).

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<sup>7</sup> This and other citations of documents will be my own translation.

## Thesis Outline

Chapter two is a review of the literature on race in general and racial identity, and more specifically, on race and education in Colombia. It firstly argues that ‘race’ and ‘racial’ identity have been reified in both theory and practice and therefore it is necessary to understand these as a social construction. I show how in Colombia that reification has been manifested in a lack of interest in the topic and has popularly been believed to be a taboo. I present arguments to demonstrate that this avoidance seems to have been strongly influenced by the historical circumstances that have been lived in the territory from the time of colonisation, which obscured racial inequality, and have made it appear trivial after the country’s independence. This chapter also contends that, different from countries such as the UK or the USA, whiteness-centred discourses have been unexplored in education in Colombia and that from that perspective, hidden elements that are involved in educational practices that configure Colombians’ identities can be revealed. I also explore the ways in which educational practices in Colombia have been analysed by other scholars, and argue that there is a need for research which analyses Colombian educational practices from the point of view of race.

Chapter 3 situates the discussion of race and racial identity in the specific theoretical tenets of this thesis. I argue that in order to grasp the relation of race and education in Colombia, it is essential to scrutinise those aspects critically, historically and structurally. As I explain, critical race theory, postcolonialism and whiteness studies offer a strong theoretical ground. Here I provide a view of what these theories are and how they relate to each other as well as their differences. I argue that the proposed theoretical framework allows scholars to understand discriminatory aspects involved in the definition of racial identity(ies), particularly considering educational practices that have been disregarded, taken as neutral or the norm. For example, approaches to identity from postcolonial studies alone have emphasised other dimensions of discrimination such as epistemic violence (see wider discussion in chapter 3) which complement the structural criticism that CRT theory initiated in terms of race. Equally, I maintain that to understand discriminatory practices, a wider view of educational practices is also necessary. Therefore, a theory of educational practice as an activity that works orchestrated in power relations of micro (teachers’ educational practices) with macro (policies and curriculum) and meso levels (media and popular culture) is also provided.

In chapter 4, I explore the methodological procedures for data collection and analysis as well as some of the limitations and ethical issues of the study. This chapter states my position as a researcher in the body of qualitative research and acknowledges my role as a co-constructor of the phenomenon analysed as well as my intimate relationship with it. I argue that my positionality as a member of the dominant ethnic group in Colombia necessarily comes to bear in the analysis of the information collected as my interpretations are informed by my own experiences. In consonance with this, I discuss how this study follows a view of reality as socially constructed. I show how in-depth interviews were used to understand teachers' experience, which at the same time serve as the basis to understand their perceptions on educational practices and racial identities. By focusing on the teachers' perspectives, I argue that their voices can disclose how structures impact their perceptions and world views. To this end, I present Critical Discourse Analysis in connection with CRT, whiteness and postcolonialism as useful approaches to examine the micro-discourses provided by teachers. In turn, this is how discourse comes to be key in scrutinising power relations that construct teachers' realities and understandings in association with racial identity and educational practices.

In chapter 5, I examine how whiteness **appears** to influence teachers' perceptions of racial identity and how those perceptions seem to be influenced by discourses in media and policies. This chapter seeks to find how power relations appear to shape educational practices and how, at the same time, those practices may have been playing a role in the construction of Colombian racial identity(ies). This chapter suggests that – at the macro level – teachers tend to comply with educational policies which seem to shape fixed identities. In doing so, they try to translate policies into educational practices without awareness of how they constitute dominant discourses of discrimination. Through teachers' perceptions, media also appears to contribute to the symbolic power of whiteness which is unperceived as a racial structure. Whiteness in this chapter is an important category that allows us to see how power relations take place in teachers' constructions of identity and support reproduction of asymmetric relationships in terms of race in educational practices.

In chapter 6, attention is centred on teachers' perceptions of racial identity and how that tends to shape their educational practice. The discussion starts by arguing that teachers' self-identification is situated in features of white privilege. The fact that this position is taken situates teachers in an imbalanced difference with other 'racial' groups. The way this misbalance occurs is part of the main debate in the chapter. In addition to this, it is

argued that essentialisation of identities plays an important place in teachers' perceptions. Within this discussion, there is a detailed description of how racial identities are shaped and how those perceptions appear to take part in educational practices according to teachers' views. The chapter ends by explaining how the transformation of discriminatory practices has led teachers to develop new essentialisms that do not appear to further eliminate the racism of unequal structures.

In chapter 7, I conclude that my study suggests that race and education is a field that still matters in the context of Latin-America despite the popular belief that the issue is trivial. It also suggests that there is a need to address this area of inquiry by studying relations between different groups rather than focusing on minorities as has been the case so far, so a more comprehensive picture of the race problem can be appreciated. This study also makes visible how education contributes to the configuration of racial identities in the country. Similarly, it also shows that education has always been part of the mechanisms that tend to reproduce practices of discrimination. In this context, teachers' perceptions seem to be shaped by dominant discourses which also seem to shape their subjectivities and impact their educational practices. Within that discussion, I argue that in order to combat racism, the first step is to dismantle racial structures that have been ingrained in society. I include suggestions considering how this dismantling can be accompanied by alliances between education and media as well as how those could work cooperatively with policy practices in order to sensitise the Colombian community towards issues of race and its implications. This work has the potential to bring about some level of transformation of education and more specifically, to be able to develop educational practices for social change.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

This project aims to explore the construction of racial identities in Colombia in relation to educational practices. Such exploration from the point of view of education is necessary considering that there have been few studies on race and education in Colombia and the existing ones have either tended to develop historical analysis in relation to colonialism (e.g. Florez-B, 2008; McGraw, 2007; Muñoz Gaviria & Runge Peña, 2005) or have focused on Colombian ethnicities rather than on the general topic of race (e.g. Bernal & Cárdenas, 2005; Hooker, 2005). Therefore, by specifically exploring the evolution of race and racism in connection with educational practices in Colombia, this research provides an innovative perspective.

In light of this general aim, this chapter focuses on how race and racial identity have developed historically in the country. The discussion that follows spells out the socio-historical and contextual conditions that have contributed to the development of Colombian racial identity(ies) as well as the role of education in that evolution. The absence of studies on race and education have disregarded possible discriminatory practices that may have been sustained in educational arenas. Dealing with issues of race in the field of education is then, contributing to fill a gap that has not been explored. This chapter starts by briefly discussing two general approaches to race and explains how one of those, in particular, offers relevant theoretical grounds to question the construct of ‘race’ as real. The discussion then moves to a revision of the literature that shows how discriminatory practices may have originated from old racist practices and how discourses have prevailed historically in the country. The chapter closes with a review of how the notion of educational practice has been addressed and how this has been seen in the specific context of Colombia. There is a need to reflect on the development of educational practices from the view of race to be able to account for practices of differentiation that have an impact on general social practices. Previous work on educational practices has not addressed issues of race and only recent work has focused on ethnicity. Important considerations regarding the population who are not considered ‘racialised’ has not received enough attention.

## **The Evolution of Colombian racial identity**

In this section I provide a critical historical account of the way racial identity has evolved in Colombia and how that process has been reflected in the educational context. Before starting to discuss the idea of racial identity in Colombia, it is necessary to explain that race has been a contested concept in theory and practice. However, it has perhaps been examined from two broad differential positions: race as a biological truth and race in a social perspective (Banton, 2002; Bernasconi, 2001; Gilroy, 2004). The first view has arisen from biological scientific studies; where race is understood as innate (Gates, 1986; Murji & Solomos, 2005). Results of those studies emphasise classificatory divisions that have produced the reification of race and that, consequently, have justified hierarchical separations in society based on ideas of innate superiority and inferiority (Banton, 2002; Bernasconi, 2001).

The second view, initiated as a reaction to the first, describes race as a social construction and denies the naturalistic explanation (Du Bois, 2001; Fanon, 2001; Gilroy, 2004; Knowles & Alexander, 2005; Nardal, 2001). Originally influenced by the results that firstly invalidated biological perspectives in Darwinist theories (Bernasconi, 2001), this reaction is a dense combination of the analysis of race made by disciplines such as history, sociology, economy, politics and anthropology (Gooding-Williams, 2001). In this perspective, race can be understood in manifold ways depending on the lens used. A socio-constructionist view of racial identity, in general, underscores the premise of race as created and reinforced in social practice. It is concerned with finding relations of how ideas of race are assimilated, produced and reproduced in social practices (Banton, 2002; Bernasconi, 2001; Lott, 2001). In this research, this discussion is linked to race working in a twofold direction: being race perceived as real in social practices whilst it is also paradoxically denied. Those aspects importantly underline how the socially created racial labels are powerful in maintaining discrimination against groups while social practices support those conditions (Banton, 2002).

The general view of that second perspective stands on the idea that race is a social construction which implies that it is not natural but perceived as such (Chadderton, 2009). On these grounds, race does not comprise a collection of categories that are used to convincingly describe a group without conflict. On the contrary, those who adhere to

a social constructionist perspective admit the already realised problem of deterministic views involved in using racial categories (Bonnett, 2000; Gilroy, 2004; Weate, 2001; Weedon, 2004; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Those racial categories are not intended to be accepted in this project. Nevertheless, for some this perspective also suggests that racial categories, as perceived by the population, are necessary to identify the pitfalls of inequality that underlay the organisation of society on the basis of 'race'. Drawing on these thoughts, this study stresses the idea that in a socially constructed view of race, issues of inequality and social justice can be considered. In Colombia, for example the most popular labels used to identify minorities are "indigenous people" and "Afro-Colombians<sup>8</sup>." More recently other groups such as Gypsies, Roma, etc. have also been categorised as racial minorities. Through those socially constructed labels these groups have been initially marginalised and later recognised in the legal framework of the country and this calls for an analysis of the socio-cultural, economic and political factors involved in racial categorisations. This analysis is favoured when race is seen as a social construction.

The way in which these socially constructed conventions or labels become meaningful is important to highlight this discussion as part of the socially constructed world view. With this, I also acknowledge the conflictual spaces in which racial identity(ies) develop and become naturalised. In Colombia, as in other Latin-American countries, the notion of racial identity is strongly influenced by colonialism. This fact makes it more complex because colonialism in Latin America was strongly characterized by intertwined practices of slavery and society has become organised in those terms. Therefore, racism has been accepted as a normal practice in social structures. However, those structures appear to be more visible to those who are marginalised. By exploring the historical evolution of the country, it is possible to unravel the complexity of Colombian 'racial' identity which is permeated by features of whiteness (i.e. a notion that places whites as superior with regards to other 'racial groups').

In this context, four salient historical moments are useful to understand such evolution: Conquest (in terms of the arrival of the Spaniards to the continent), Colonisation (three centuries of exploitation in Spaniards' settlement), Republic (revolution and independence) and Constitution (the constitutional reform in terms of the recognition of

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<sup>8</sup> *Afro-Colombian or Afro-descendant* is a term that has been adopted contemporarily in the country referring to black people. However, DANE (2005) (National Department of Statistics) has also added mixed *zambos* and *mulatos* under the same category because of their African ancestry. In the context of this text, the word *black*, or *Afro-Colombian* or *Afrodescendants* or any other are used accordingly when the historical context makes it more appropriate.

ethnic minorities) (Rodriguez, 2006). Those moments have clearly contributed to shaping what Colombian racial identity has come to mean. However, it is important to note that, albeit to different degrees, the first three moments highlight the superiority of whites (i.e. Spanish colonisers) overtly (during the conquest and the colony) and covertly (in the republic). Therefore, instead of four moments I propose to review the development of Colombian racial identity in two stages: historical and contemporary. The historical covers the first three moments sketched by Rodriguez (2006) and the contemporary refers to the developments generated after the recognition of ethnic minorities in the Constitution. The historical stage is characterised by the legitimisation of both whiteness-centred discourses and discriminatory social practices against minority ‘others’. The contemporary stage of racial identity and social practices embraces the period that spans the changes enacted by the current National constitution and recognition of the country as pluri-cultural and multi-ethnic (1991). This period includes contemporary popular and institutional discourses and practices that have taken place in Colombia with the intention of fighting historical racist ideas that have been part of the Colombian population (Chaves & Zambrano, 2006). The following sub-sections discuss each of these stages in depth.

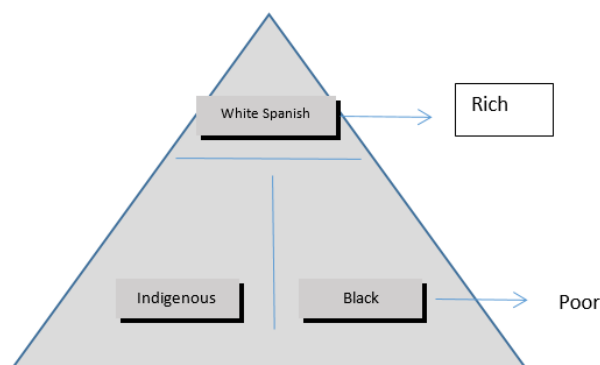
### ***The historical evolution of Colombian racial identity***

The social construction of race in Colombia can be said to have started in colonisation. In this period, Spanish and African communities started to occupy the territory where Colombia is located now and began to form what is the Colombian society of today. As Wade (1995) sets out, since the very beginning of that time, the country has been hierarchically and geographically organised according to people’s race (white superior and others less valued socially, economically and culturally). Based on the legal exploitation of black people as slaves and indigenous people as servants (Biblioteca-Nal-de-Colombia, 2016), this long-time oppression established a strong print of discrimination that reflects on Colombian’s racial identity.

During the colonisation, Spaniards use of violence and murder imposed their command and subjected indigenous and black people to slavery and mistreatment (Telles & Flores, 2013). These facts radically changed the way of living in the former Colombian populations (Bohórquez, 1956). The aberrant actions were justified on Spaniards’ perceptions of Indian people as inferior and backward due to what they thought were rudimentary characteristics of their lives. After fights and negotiations, colonisers later



brought black people from Africa to work as slaves and this gave indigenous people a slight advantageous status which in comparison with black people. Anyhow both groups were exploited to receive economic benefits from their work (BBC-Mundo, 2007). Despite the fights developed by the native inhabitants in their defence, they found themselves being dominated as a result of the Spaniards' procedures based on exploitation, punishment and murder (Wade, 2005). Therefore, the Colombian territory in the beginning of the colony became organised by three different 'racial' groups which were visibly unequal socially and economically.



**Figure 1:** Race hierarchical socio-economic organisation in Colombia in the colony

As can be seen in figure 1, with the Spanish snatch, indigenous and black people ended up located in the lowest status, while white Spaniards came to be the richest group occupied the top privileged position. This is how an intersection between class and race started to shape Colombian society in a socio-economic triangular organisation that lasted more than a century in the colony around 1492-1600.

After that, there was a subsequent expansion of race-mixing which caused a generation of new mixed ethnic groups (Koopman, 2012). **This mixture was an important stage to blur the race-class differences that continue to prevail in the structural organisation of the country.** As mentioned before, indigenous people received gradually differentiated treatment in comparison with black people (BBC-Mundo, 2007; Lasso, 2009; Safford, 1991). However, with the Spanish abuse and murder, groups (indigenous and blacks and most mestizos who were not recognised as legitimate children) were affected to face an adverse future as disadvantaged communities in the country. The groups that preserved their legacy as ethnicities in the long period of 'slavery' were also deprived of their rights which they still fought to recover (Bello & Rangel, 2000; Chaves & Zambrano, 2006; OAS, 2004).

Several attempts were carried out to diminish discrimination and injustice that emerged in the time of colonisation against those groups. For example, the Burgos law in 1512 (Ley de Burgos) motivated by Fray Bartolome De Las Casas, aimed to diminish violence and brutal acts against indigenous populations (Sánchez Domingo, 2012). Instead, conversion into Catholicism was proposed. On the basis of this predicament the attempt to reduce injustice, included a few rules that sought to protect indigenous people. Nevertheless, those rules did not stop racial discrimination and abuse (Wade, 1995). A second serious attempt to diminish racial inequality and discrimination in Colombia only occurred three hundred years later with the abolition of slavery to black people (1851). In The New Granade (a former name for Colombia), one of the first presidents of the country, Jose Hilario Lopez (1849-1853) favoured the abolition change (Helg, 2001). This was done in parallel with the attempt to unify Colombian identity in a unique racial identity which was called *mestizo* (Koopman, 2012). This recognition rendered Colombian inhabitants with a sense of close relationship which included all races with equal rights (Wade, 1995). In a new born republic, this formal recognition as a race-mixed country, through the category of *Mestizo*, played a positive role to increase social cohesion for a long time (Chaves & Zambrano, 2006). Thus, the notion of race was taken in opposition to *mestizaje* (*race-mixing*) (Ng'Weno, 2007).

Despite the huge impact of *mestizaje* on the consolidation of a national identity, racial discrimination was always a concern<sup>9</sup>. Helg (2001), Lasso (2009) and (Safford, 1991) report studies in the history of independence that show the issue of racial equality was the centre of disputes to define norms and policy priorities while they also implied whitening<sup>10</sup> the population was a way to progress. For example, a policy favouring international immigration was made on the basis of improving Colombian race through mixing (Ministerio-de-Relaciones-exteriores, 1922). Due to the unfair 'racial' organisation of Colombian society, 'racial' diversity acquired ranked status. Although indigenous people were strategically more integrated (more in private than in public (Safford, 1991)), reinforced by the economical difference that separated the groups, they, as well as Afro-Colombians came to be portrayed as uncivilised and lacking intelligence. In turn, whites in the elite positions came to be characterized as wise and intellectual (Vela, 2012; Wade, 1995). This depiction of whites as superior originated

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<sup>9</sup> The 70 law against racial discrimination, *tutela* 442.1998, the documents generated in the recognition of races and the general literature mention the worry of racial discrimination that is still a preoccupation.

<sup>10</sup> Whitening is referred in the literature as the desire to civilised the population and changing their genealogy by mixing (Safford, 1991)

in the colonisation of Colombia appears to have prevailed symbolically mainly in the collective imagination of popular culture. This prevalence has affected the contemporary social relations and racial identity(ies) of Colombian people who, rarely accept the existence of racist practices while they accept hidden discriminatory practices against 'racial' groups or themselves when they represent such an affected group.

Although many historical political events took part after the country was declared a republic, the country nowadays still reflects racial divisions in a land split into two major classes: upper classes 30% (generally the offspring of old castes and emergent traders of capitalism) and lower classes 70% (working class and farmers in which black, indigenous and other minorities are commonly found)<sup>11</sup> (Moreno, 2016). From another angle, over the last two hundred years Colombian racial identity(ies) has mainly been impacted in bifurcated directions: by persistent national policies reflecting whiteness-centred approaches and on the other hand, by the recognition of national identity as pluri-cultural in the last national constitution (Chaves & Zambrano, 2006).

In the first direction whiteness is tacit in policy while it is embedded in the value attributed to foreign advice in national decisions. This can be seen, in the international treaties that usually advise on guidelines that follow standards, which are alien to local socio- economic and cultural needs. Ospina (1999), for example, refers to policies of 'open market' that justify the interest of multinationals in Colombian territory. In the second direction, the two decades in which Colombia has constitutionally recognised as a pluri-cultural country has provoked huge changes that have not been clearly assimilated by the whole population (Chaves & Zambrano, 2006; Ng'Weno, 2007).

Whilst only the indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities that have been territorialised have been 'favoured' by the benefits of pluri-cultural recognition (Chaves & Zambrano, 2006), the rest of the population seem to be either in conflict, indifferent or in a process of understanding what this change from the mestizo identity means.

As a follow up to the debate on the social construction of racial identity in the history of Colombia, a revision of the underexplored aspects of the events that firstly organised Colombia as a nation now follows. Particularly, I refer to the race ideological features that supported the decisions made by liberators in order to organise the country. The awareness of those racial elements might permit a more comprehensive understanding

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<sup>11</sup> This is a calculation by relating the migration reports in historic documents such as Chaves and Zambrano (2006) and the official DANE report of poverty (2015) that presents two main categories: 1. municipal centres and 2. towns and dispersed rural areas where the poverty is reported at 41%. In the city centres and towns, the 25,6 % only preserve the richest part of the country (DANE, 2015) and this is crossed with the information in regards to the social class organisation (Moreno, 2016).

of how social practices of the historical development have contributed to the construction of a multifaceted and conflicting Colombian racial identity which also ingrains discrimination.

### ***The Ideology of Mestizaje: a revisionist reading***

History has usually represented independence as a new stage in which people started to experience liberty, democracy and equity. However, given the socio-economic realities, this has not necessarily been the case. By revisiting the racial ideologies of the creoles in power, it is possible to bring to light some of the critical elements that started to organise Colombian society whilst inequality, injustice and discrimination were taken for granted.

In the settlement of Colombia as an independent Republic, different governments worked towards developing a national identity that could conciliate the inequality and eradicate the traces of the past (Telles & Flores, 2013; Wade, 1995). In 1810, there was already a new ‘racial’ group called creoles, who despite having Spanish parents were not considered ‘pure’ Spanish and, consequently, were not entitled to have the same legal benefits. The situation antagonised the creoles and motivated them to start a revolution. Motivated by the political slogans defending the idea of living in a new egalitarian society with no race or social difference, the general population supported that revolution (Koopman, 2012). From that moment, this situation created a ‘neutral’ position to Creoles<sup>12</sup>. In this fashion, with indigenous, Afro-Colombians and mestizos on their side, creoles managed to make the country independent and take a position of power (Quiceno, 2003). However, after the creoles’ success, the promise of equality was soon broken. This was reflected in the fact that the abolition of slavery, one of the promises of the revolution, did not happen. It is argued that creoles broke their promise of an inclusive equal national society because this idea was not convenient for them (Quiceno, 2003; Wade, 1995). It appears that the creoles’ intention was not to change the economic organisation of the country, since their economic position had already benefited them. They actually wanted the Spanish to return to the privilege and power they thought they deserved as pure caste heirs (Quiceno, 2003). Nevertheless, they needed the rest of the Colombian people to be on their side so they could obtain the power and reliability to rule the country. This is when the idea of adopting a national

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<sup>12</sup> This position of neutrality acquired was referred by Santiago Castro as the *hybris 0*, see (Castro-Gómez, 2005a)

new racial category of *mestizaje* served as the formula to shape an inclusive national identity in a new nation (Chaves & Zambrano, 2006; Wade, 1995) while it also became crucial in benefit of the creoles' agenda.

From a different angle, with creoles in power, the Spanish racial influence continued. Creoles came to take the position of the old white Spanish oligarchies. Moreover, they all studied in Europe and assimilated the values of Western society as historical reviews report (e.g. Helg, 2001; Wade, 1995). Therefore, their background influenced the way Colombia was conceived as a new Republic (Quiceno, 2003; UNICEF, 1986). In this context, the idea of *mestizaje* as aligned with equality is full of contradictions. It was a rhetoric that presented *mestizaje* as a morally neutral conjunction onto a non-hierarchised middle ground (Wade, 1993). In the same vein, Afro-Colombian, indigenous people were also absorbed by that emergent racial identity, disregarding the differences in the organisation of the society that located them in disadvantage. There were discrepancies in terms of the goal of having a uniform society with no 'race' differences, in terms of the Colombian racial identity leading to what Wade (1995) and others call a 'whitening mestizo' nation. Within this term, *Mestizos* developed a way of thinking where the desire of transformation towards white was implied.

Affected by family backgrounds and racial results of scientific advance in which the white superiority was continuously demonstrated, creoles believed that *mestizaje* was a way to whiten the country (Safford, 1991). The results of scientific research regarding a eugenic relation (genetic theories of 'race' improvement) between 'race' and intelligence influenced the Colombian rulers to believe in a hierarchy of human 'races' (Castro-Gómez, 2005a; Wade, 1995). Consequently, more than developing social cohesion, creoles thought *mestizaje* would help to regenerate the 'race' of inferior black and indigenous people by mixing them with whites and making them look alike (Safford, 1991; Wade, 1995).

While it is true that referring to the general population as *mestizos* brought a sense of close relationship among them, racist attitudes prevailed (Ng'Weno, 2007; Viáfara & Giraldo, 2006; Williams, 2013). Thereafter, the ideas of 'race' regeneration shaped the political discourse of different leaders of the country. Helg (2001) for example recounts several cases in which important leaders referred to black people as barbarous and indigenous people as less intelligent, accepting the scientific assumptions that lowered the value of non-white people. By using 'mestizo' as a 'race' neutral category, old

racial prejudices were supposed to decline. On the contrary, new forms of discrimination emerged against the so-called mestizos. Politics and media connected mestizos with a degeneration of the white European pure 'race' (Helg, 2001). For example, in the 1920's, president Marco Fidel Suarez made public his preoccupation to develop the country towards a "Nordic evolution"<sup>13</sup>. Bearing in mind that a politician's discourse is influential to cultural practices (Van Dijk, 1993), the president's words were a great influence in shaping the Colombian people's identity towards a naturalisation of negative values and stereotypes of inferiority. Additionally, those events also met the formation of guerrillas in the 50's in which affected groups seemed to be involved and as ethnic minorities that contributed to their own stigmatisation (Cifuentes, 2016). The underlying ideas of this discourse became objectivised and evolved as common sense in the Colombian population, and have impacted on the articulation of a Colombian racial identity historically. In turn, the idea of white people as superior has coexisted silently causing invisibility of and disdain towards local minorities (e.g. labelled indigenous and Afro-Colombian). Consequently, whiteness has acquired symbolic power and has come to be desirable and the centre of admiration. Castro-Gómez (2005a) has referred to this as the whiteness device, which he defines as a cognitive device that has been installed in Colombians to believe of white superiority. Thus far, I have illustrated the sway of socio-historical factors in the configuration of a Colombian racial identity. I have specially pointed out that discriminatory ideologies in the mestizo national identity chosen by pioneer government leaders may have impacted greatly on this. Since governmental decisions affect social institutions, education as one of those institutions played a significant role in shaping Colombian 'racial' identity(ies). I now move on to focus on how institutionalised formal education has historically played a role in the configuration of Colombian racial identity(ies).

### **The Role of Education in the configuration of Colombian Racial Identity**

Education from its constitution has contributed to widening the gap that was already created between 'racial' groups in colonisation. Previous studies on the history of education report details of the socio-economic and cultural elements involved in the beginning and evolution of the education system (e.g. Cifuentes, 2016; Helg, 2001; Quiceno, 2003) that may have contributed to the construction of Colombian racial

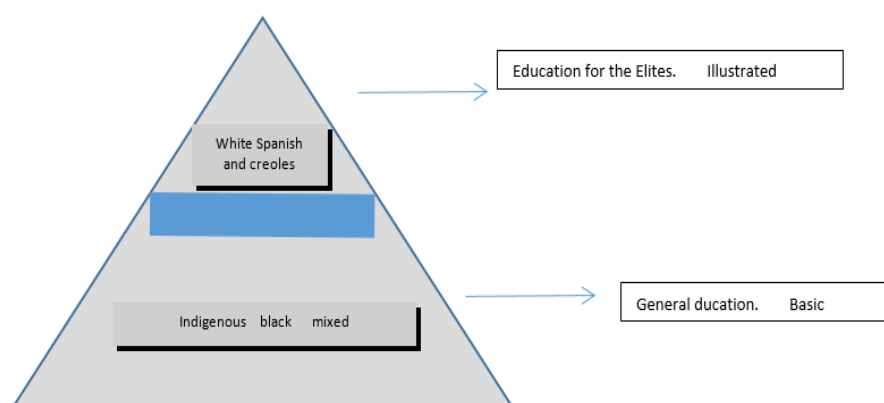
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<sup>13</sup> The Nordic attribution was theoretically related with ideas of evolution and progress embedded in Northern countries in the modern stage as evidenced in the president Marco Fidel's metaphor.

identity. Although these issues are not tackled directly, this section considers the racial issues explicitly.

An initial point of analysis refers to the system of education post-independence.

Intriguingly, in the time of independence, education was first conceived as the means to educate the general population (non-white) following tenets of equality. However, that equality did not happen as proposed due to the fact that creole elites deemed education should be more specialised and different for themselves (Helg, 2001; Quiceno, 2003). In this fashion, education was accessible to all, but was not delivered in the same way for everybody. Creoles (white elites) had specialised education in culture and arts while the education for the general population (non-white) focused only on the basic subjects (Maths and literacy) (Quiceno, 2003). Following Entwistle (2011), it can be said that, in this view, education could contribute to cultural opportunity or cultural deprivation. So, as education was planned differently to the advantage of creole elites, it clearly widened the gap between ‘racial’ groups in intersection with class. In this sense, two parallel unequal societies were created in the context of Colombia with the support of education (see figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Education contributing to widening the racial gap in intersection with class

The differentiation contributed to shaping a racial identity that elevated white elites to socio-economic and symbolic power and prestige whereas blacks, indigenous people and mixed people were gradually marginalised to material and symbolic poverty and ignorance. This was also supported by other institutions such as the church who politically represented private education and defended it because it was under their jurisdiction (Helg, 2001). Later this symbolic power of whiteness created in education

was also reinforced by ideas of progress that were imbedded in the desire of modernisation and democracy in which countries such as USA took an active role (Zuniga, 1979). In short, even though education was one of the purported vehicles of change, liberty and equity in the independence of the country, its general organisation did not really contribute to that purpose. The creoles' desire for power, the interest of the general elites, the intervention of the church and later discourses of power played a significant role in deepening inequality in terms of race and socioeconomic conditions in the country through education (Camargo González, 2011).

On the other hand, racial identity in Colombia was also affected through education by the cultural movement of Enlightenment that Europe was experiencing<sup>14</sup>. As previously mentioned, creoles were influenced by the results of the studies in which whites' intelligence was thought to be superior (Helg, 2001). Consequently, eugenic ideas considering racial differences underpinned their proposed instructional and educational policies. In the light of this, new educational policies and practices regarding cleaning and feeding for children were introduced. It was suggested that through body care and better eating habits it was possible to regenerate inferior 'races' (Carrizosa Moog, 2014). To this end, a new law that promulgated careful hygiene was introduced in the public schools<sup>15</sup> (Ministerio-de-Instruccion-Publica, 1926) (Helg, 2001). In the same vein, educational practices were highly influenced by the beliefs that white children were more intelligent, therefore a more elevated level of education different from that for so-called indigenous, Afro-Colombian or mixed children was needed (Helg, 2001; Quiceno, 2003). [As seen in other studies of race and education in other countries \(Gillborn, 2010\)](#), in Colombia, whiteness also started to link with the idea of progress (Castro-Gómez, 2005a; Garzón Martínez, 2007; Koopman, 2012; Telles & Flores, 2013).

Eugenics inherited from the enlightenment prevailed for a long time. Alfonso Lopez Pumarejo (1934-1938), a former president, in a national conference of teachers, made it explicit when he addressed the focus of the teaching guild:

[t]o make Colombian people a strong human group in terms of corporal force, spiritual power, [ability] to construct his own culture based on his own resources, despite the

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<sup>14</sup> Telles & Flores (2013) note this as affecting the general Latin-American continent.

<sup>15</sup> See law 0012 1926, "About the teaching of hygiene, sanitation of seaports, docks and territories and the main cities of the Republic."



hostility of their geography and their possible ethnic inferiority, they must be able to develop this enterprise based on a renewed, unique, free, compulsory, democratic and selective primary school [...] (Cited in Helg, 2001, p. 143).

Even though the intention of the conference was to call the Colombian teachers to establish parameters for the improvement of education through reaching uniformity and recognition of their own values, this intention was constructed based on a national identity underpinned by a deterministic view of race and geography.

Going back to the discussion above, a view of Colombians as a mixture composed of 'negative racial' features bluntly impacted the education of the country by building symbolic privilege in terms of whiteness. By analysing the examples made by Leonardo and Norton (2014), it is possible to see that in Colombia there are similar features of whiteness centred education. Whiteness centred curriculum in Colombia for example, was seen in the selection of curriculum contents to be covered specially in subjects such as history and citizenship, which at that time were thought to be the most important subjects. The contents chosen emphasised the creoles as heroes giving independence to the country while omitting the struggles of indigenous and oppressed communities. By the same token, (racist) thoughts (that revealed acceptance of superiority and inferiority) were uncritically spread through education. For example, science lessons reflected the results that European and Colombian intellectuals were developing that justified 'race' inferiority (Helg, 2001). Hence, with the prominence given to intellectuals in the national curriculum<sup>16</sup>, eugenic thinking was immersed through all the structure and the backdrop of education. This is why, I assert that beyond spreading the ideas of race inferiority, education has also been the basis of the configuration of a 'racial' identity with discriminatory features.

In the specific structure of education, despite in the 50's there was a boom to change education to reach more independence and originality and that in the 80's there was an important contribution of a 'pedagogical movement' that created the teachers' statute (Cifuentes, 2016), it seems that Colombia has struggled to find an original pedagogical

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<sup>16</sup> For example, Francisco Jose de Caldas was a well-known Colombian naturalist from the elite who was an almost mandatory reference in the school curriculum. He affirmed that living in the highlands (The Andes) of Colombia permitted white people to preserve their colour as opposed to living in the tropics where savages usually preserve a darker colour. Citing some of his own words in 1808 "When this [facial] angle grows, all of the organs of intelligence and reason grow; when it diminishes, these faculties also diminish. The European has 85° and the African 70°. What a difference between these two races of human beings! The arts, sciences, humanity, the Empire of earth are the patrimony of the first; brutishness, barbarity and ignorance are the endowments of the second. Climate has formed this important angle. It is climate that has dilated or compressed the cranium, and climate has also dilated or compressed the faculties of soul and morality." (As cited by Koopman, 2012. Pg. 56)"

identity<sup>17</sup> without the help of (white) western influences. In this regard, Quiceno (2003) and Helg (2001) agree that several attempts have been made to develop an original education system for Colombia. Nonetheless, this goal has not escaped from dependence of foreign (usually western) validation (Bohórquez, 1956; Helg, 2001; Quiceno, 2003). Thus, the inability to create an authentic philosophy of education with adequate procedures may have contributed to developing a whiteness-centred racial identity as well.

This idea of foreign western validation can be briefly illustrated by the historical descriptions made by Helg (2001) in which she highlights that in the beginning of the republic there was a wish to have a new education system where the\* principles of Catholicism played a vital role. [Indeed, as Leonardo and Norton \(2014\) write, the imposition of catholic beliefs in education mirrored the moral values of education of Spanish colonisers whereas ‘indigenous’ people’s beliefs and cultural traditions were oppressed and were not considered.](#) In turn, Quiceno (2003) also makes the case that the education system of public instruction<sup>18</sup> was a clear copy of the system in Spain (Quiceno, 2003). One example he reports is the importation of the Lancaster model<sup>19</sup> of education from England with the hope that its implementation would be as successful as in Europe but, as was expected, that was not the case. Helg (2001) and Quiceno (2003) cite that since 1870, there has been external (mostly western) intervention in educational matters. These orientations have been criticised in some respects for: their lack of sensitivity to the Colombian context, the lack of connection between the experts’ interests as foreigners and the local interests, and the lack of plausibility between the economic investment and the results obtained (Federici et al., 2017; Tamayo Valencia, 2007). Nonetheless, the permanent attitude of seeking western approval in the desire to enhance education raises a lot of questions as a case of (racial) identity in the representation of whiteness as wisdom. Judging from the criticisms that decisions on the external advice have received, it appears that those pedagogical ideas have been adopted uncritically and have validated white superiority. In this line of thought, knowledge is legitimised only in relation to western views. The way education has been set out in the country has contributed not only to Colombian ‘racial’ inequality and

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<sup>17</sup> In this study, I have used the concept of pedagogical identity to refer to a proposed set of pedagogical principles whose philosophy is created to be tailored to a specific context.

<sup>18</sup> Public instruction was the first name that State education received in the territory as a Republic.

<sup>19</sup> Lancaster method was a pedagogical model developed by an English pedagogue in the beginning of the XIX century. This method placed emphasis on supporting the teachers’ work with the cooperation of the most advanced students (Quiceno, 2003).

discrimination in its structure, but also to the racialisation of pedagogical discourses of educational practice from a whiteness-centred perspective.

The discussion above shows that Colombian racial identity has been rooted in the objectification of white superior ideologies that were spread and reaffirmed, to a great extent, through educational practices. Nevertheless, there have been changes after the recognition of indigenous communities in the constitution of 1991. Because of that recognition and the eruption of indigenous social movements, education would begin to experiment changes such as ethno-education. This is an issue I will return to in the next section when I discuss the role of education in contemporary social practices. For the time being, I move on to consider current issues of race and racism.

### ***A contemporary outlook on race and racism in Colombia***

As seen in previous sections, the national political events in the history of Colombia have impacted the population to construct racial identity(ies) in an asymmetric relationship. Equally education has contributed in different dimensions to articulating a racial identity(ies) that responds to the political and economic demands which have not necessarily improved equality and democracy. The racial identity of Colombian people has been affected by those dynamics that do not consider local needs. Colombian 'racial' identity(ies) is, in this way, fragmented and its development appears to favour discriminatory social practices. Therefore, a contemporary view of race and racism in Colombia needs to be considered in detail. I argue in the next section that racial structures have prevailed and have been sustained in intersection with class. Despite this, they are not perceived, but these structures are visible in the geography of the country as well as in the imaginaries of people. This has consequently sustained racism with specific manifestations that have become a 'normal' practice.

### ***Race in Colombia today***

Some authors such as Telles and Flores (2013) have noted that for many Latin-Americans, race is strongly marked by whiteness in contemporary practices. However, people are not aware of this because it has been embodied in modernity and progress (Castro-Gomez, 2000). Whiteness often symbolises status and privilege and social capital, therefore, this racial category is hidden in its intersection with class. By the same token, progress has been the basis to distinguish civilised and uncivilised people

(Ng'Weno, 2007). Koopman (2012) as well as Telles and Flores (2013) report that whiteness has a commodity value in Latin America that has been discussed in theories of race-as-class. This commodity value is an aspect found in a mestizo whitening notion of race (Castro-Gómez, 2005a; Telles & Flores, 2013). In other words, there is a hierarchy in which lighter colour has social, cultural and even economic value and benefit and non-white seems to be undervalued. As reported by Castro-Gómez (2005a), Colombia as a mestizo country, is an example that involves this whiteness superiority.

The intersection between race and class has been longstanding and it has strongly been reproduced and reinforced. By this same argument, Telles and Flores (2013) use a common saying “money whitens” in that it is not only whites who might be classified as whites but this also includes those who seem to be white by their privilege. These ideas of white privilege might also have increased through celebrity influence or a desire of pursuing the American dream as may be inferred from Telles and Flores (2013). Muñoz Gaviria and Runge Peña (2005) assert that due to the symbolic power that light skin colour has in Colombians, there has been an increase in the admiration of the body.

Different from studies in other countries such as the UK (e.g. Gillborn & Youdell, 2009), racism in Colombia seems to be sustained under those premises of whiteness centrality which undervalue even Colombian's identity itself. In other words, racism is instilled by the cognitive acceptance of non-white as inferior in intersection with class.

In another view, Koopman (2012) makes the point that in Colombia class promotes racism because race and class support each other in ‘spaces’. By space, she means territories that identify the different Colombian ‘races’. In her words, there are “spaces that are racialised and ‘races’ that are spacialised”. That is to say, that some areas of the country are commonly associated with poverty while others are associated with progress and internal colonialism. For example, Choco, where 82.1% of the population is classified as Afro-Colombian (DANE, 2005) is in the first case while Medellin<sup>20</sup> and surrounding areas, with their history of aristocracy, has been classified in the second case. In light of this, whiteness is associated with progress and internal colonialism while the different non-white ‘others’ are in disadvantage as illustrated in studies developed in the UK (e.g. Vincent, Rollock, Ball, & Gillborn, 2012). The previous point leads back to the frail project of equality and justice in Colombia that I pointed out in the historical review. In this context, the racial identity of Colombians includes socio-

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<sup>20</sup> Medellin is classified as the second biggest city of Colombia. Historically it has been an important place where many Spanish aristocrat families lived in the colonial stage. A great number of the Colombian presidents have been born in that city.

economic and political features. Particularly, the traces of the past are still visible in the socio-economic organisation of the country since skin colour and privilege seem to go together while race goes unnoticed.

In order to address this situation of inequality, the government introduced policy changes which awarded territories – known as *resguardos*<sup>21</sup> – to the affected groups (indigenous people). Nowadays the occupancy of these territories has been made official as a way to comply with the mandates of the National Constitution. This change should have transformed positively the uneven situation of the country as it should have also transformed cultural representations of indigenous and Afro-Colombian groups who have been entitled to them. Unfortunately, critiques show that the impact has been short of expectations (Hooker, 2005; Ng'Weno, 2007). Hooker (2005) for example, reports that these *resguardos* are lands generally in deprived areas with little support from the government. At the same time, these territories have been affected by ecotourism projects and the presence of activities of paramilitary groups that have made dwellers move, by force, to other poor areas (Centre, 2007). Since the government seems not to have considered the situation of these populations as a priority of their agenda, the law can be considered as sponsoring segregation (Hooker, 2005).

From another perspective, it seems that indigenous communities are recently affected by other troubles derived from policy changes. These populations are required to fit the model of ethnicity delineated by laws. In doing this, these communities have used strategies that involve adapting rudimentary ways of living which are no longer productive in nowadays economic system. In light of this, Ng'Weno (2007) and Hooker (2005) agree on the fact that the recognition of ethnicities in the country has also brought difficulties for those communities' identities. Although in a different situation, this is similar to what happens in the UK where black communities seem to use racial identity strategically – in intersection with class – to avoid institutional racism (Rollock, Gillborn, Vincent, & Ball, 2015). In the case of Colombia, those strategies may have involved indigenous people in what Spivak (1988) has called strategic essentialism; a way to accept essential features of an identity and adopt it for political benefit (Bonilla, 2016).

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<sup>21</sup> A *resguardo* is a territory granted to the indigenous people by the National government. This territory is a communal territory and it is inalienable. The decree 2363 of 1994: procedures of clarification about the situation related to indigenous and Afro-Colombian lands. This decree was originated in the law 30 of 1988.

Additionally, indigenous people in Colombia have also been affected by new movements and marketing desires. For instance, Ng'Weno (2007) claims that media and international companies have made indigenous people adjust their ways of living to the external images that are foreign to them. That is, as this has also been reported in the studies of the UK, communities try to fit the stereotyped images of indigenous tribes so they can gain recognition. In fact, media produce culture whose contact with indigenous tribes tangle them in the reconstruction of new identities that are adjusted to the desire of marketing companies. Hence, ethnicities and diaspora cannot really reach their own rhythm of progress because they are modifying their lifestyles to comply with the demand of the market.

In the country, not only has the identity of indigenous communities been affected but also the perception that the rest of the population has on them. For instance, Ng'Weno (2007) agrees with Hooker (2005) that, because of the law, the identities of these communities are bonded to territories. That is, people seem to associate them only if situated on those territories. This means that indigenous or African communities who decide not to live in the territory seem to fit nowhere. As a result of the oppressive socio-economic conditions, marginalised Afro-Colombian and indigenous people are stereotyped by the rest of the population and even accused of being guilty of their own poor economic conditions (Wade, 1995).

With the symbolic power given to whites in intersection with class and the conflicted situation of minority groups, there seems to be a blurred panorama of racial identity and recognition in the country that situates the general identity of Colombian people in conflict too. This is why it is not strange to think that the so-called mestizo identity articulates contradictory factors. On the one hand, as non-white, they are symbolically and/or materially oppressed. On the other hand, they enjoy privilege within the internal structure and practices in the country that follows a 'whitening mestizo' ideology. The internal struggles that Colombian people live with mediate between progress and marginalisation, that polarises their identities and underlies values that affect their social practices. Since the purpose of this study is to analyse how education and more specifically educational practices may contribute to racial identity constructions, I will now refer to the impact that policies of ethnicisation have brought in education and how this appears to be supporting the understanding of racial identities today.

## Education and the configuration of racial identity in contemporary social practices

To have a broader understanding of the relationship between racial identity and education when focusing only on minority communities, it is also necessary to understand the impact of the policies related on the rest of the community. Therefore, a brief explanation of ethnicisation reflected on ethno-education and inclusion policies and their role in transforming the 'racial' identities of Colombian people is included in this section.

The recent period that has come after the constitutional recognition of Colombia as a multi-cultural and pluri-ethnic country has brought about a boom called ethnicisation. Hoffmann (2008) defines ethnicisation as the process of making minority groups and communities more visible through constitutional recognition of their identities. This recognition involves mainly: access to land, political representation, health and education (Presidencia-de-la-republica, 1993). According to Herrera (2008), thanks to ethnicisation, Afro-Colombians have gained spaces which have permitted them to participate in political bodies and make decisions as citizens. In light of this view, the National Ministry of Education passed two main policies that have impacted education: policies of *ethno-education* and *inclusion*. The former attempts to provide differentiated education for ethnic minorities while the latter aim to open access to those communities along the mainstream system. These policies along with other linguistic policies included in the general law of education look to transform racial identity through education in an understanding of difference and plurality.

Ethno-education is a contemporary form of education that deals with differentiated education for indigenous communities and tribes (MEN, 2015b). This sort of education evolved as a programme specifically addressed towards Colombian indigenous communities and Afro-Colombian tribes that are thought to continue to survive as communities. This was done in order to preserve their ancestry, traditions and customs. Thus, ethno-education seems to have developed in two similar but also different ways: firstly, as the philosophy underpinning the government programmes for minority communities (Afro-Colombian and indigenous mainly) in education; and secondly as a strategy to recognise the value of Afro-Colombian groups and their contribution to the Colombian culture (Patiño, 2004).

Ethno-education in the two ways described above has brought reflections on education from two different perspectives. One perspective contains considerations of the way

indigenous socio-cultural practices can be incorporated in the curriculum of education in indigenous communities (Artunduaga, 1997; Castillo Guzmán, 2008; Jackson, 1995; Ortiz & Guzmán, 2008; Patiño, 2004). Another perspective considers reflections on how to link the socio-cultural knowledge of Afro-Colombian heritage to the country's mainstream curriculum. The Ministry (MEN, 2015a) describes, in the first case, multiple projects that have covered ethno-education as such. In the second case, reflections have increased to recognise Afro-Colombians as having a defined culture with the purpose of counteracting racial discrimination. Research in ethno-education has underscored the woven relationships involved in carrying out this type of education and how this has affected its educational practices.

Inclusion is a policy derived from a project of social inclusion of the United Nations for the Latin-American and Caribbean regions (PUDN). This policy in Colombia has worked in education to focus on providing equal opportunities to pupils to access education regardless of their physical, gender, ethnic, cultural but first and foremost mental conditions (MEN, 2015b). That is to say, this policy of inclusion does not specifically refer to ethnicities. Inclusion of ethnicities seems to be mainly determined by the parameters developed in ethno-education.

The programme of ethno-education alongside the programme of inclusion has brought advances in Colombia as a pluri-cultural society. As Rojas Curieux (2010) suggests, indigenous communities are now more visible and are also more integrated in mainstream society. In ethno-education, Afro-Colombian cross-curricular projects or commands have been designed to integrate Afro-Colombian or indigenous activities and academic contents in the curriculum (Patiño, 2004).

Even if the current landscape apparently shows a more sensible relation of 'race' and education, it appears that the situation has impacted more on the documents than the people (Chaves & Zambrano, 2006; Ng'Weno, 2007). [In the context of the USA, Leonardo and Norton \(2014\) have referred to this problem as a failure in multicultural education because, even though changes have happened, the curriculum continues to be irrelevant to minorities. This happens because the curriculum does not reflect minorities' world view and does not reflect social inequality. On the contrary, it appears to be assumed to be universal. Impacting social life, the minority groups experience racism because foreign interests rather than their own are centre to their education and disregard their own sociocultural needs. On the other hand, the mainstream curriculum does not seem to have a clear integration of inclusive practices. As asserted by Ahmed](#)



(2012 in Walton et al., 2018) “inclusion can also be used to exclude, especially when constructed boundaries of who is included or who is excluded are not critically examined” (p. 139). The national Ministry of Education in Colombia in this case declares mestizo as the hegemonic racial group in the country (MEN, 2015b) and with this declaration, it endorsed the decision to have a special ethno-education that focuses on minorities. Nevertheless, this choice has not involved a reflection on the mestizo identity in mainstream education. There is therefore a critical need to analyse the dynamics of inclusion from a different view: the view of the ‘mestizo’ society and mainstream education in Colombia. In fact, Villegas (2014), confirms that the study of the *mestizo* identity has been a salient gap in literature that needs to be researched not only in the context of education but also in the general context of social practices of Colombia. This also needs to be analysed in relation to neoliberal processes that globalisation has brought which some have criticised as bringing education an instrumentation that has produced it as an enterprise (Quiceno, 2003).

### ***Racism in Colombia today***

Despite the fight against racism, this has prevailed in different social practices of Colombia to date. The contradictory elements of racial identity have opened space for racism to persist to different degrees and in different forms in the last two centuries. This is despite the atmosphere of change and transformation with the efforts to fight discrimination, chiefly after recognition of Colombia as pluri-cultural and multi-ethnic, (Hooker, 2005; Ng'Weno, 2007; Wade, 1995). The reason why this discrimination continues to happen is explained by Leonardo and Norton (2014) as part of institutional racism. In agreement with other CRT scholars such as Delgado (2001), these authors differentiate institutional racism from particular practices of racism. The former relates to the injustice that has been installed in a racist system in terms of social, economic and political difference while the latter are the fixed stereotyped practices that are derived from that system. This unfair situation maintains social practices that are discriminatory and keep them accepted and normal. In Colombia racism is seen, for instance, in the division into ‘ethnic’<sup>22</sup> minorities that still seek to claim their recognition in the country while the rest of the population are indifferent to those claims. Racism also appears to

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<sup>22</sup> Ethnic groups have been the term taken in Colombia for indigenous and Afro-Colombian minorities. However, Ng'weno (2007) has discussed that the concept is problematic for Afro-Colombians since many of them are not tied to lands. Then, in the legal frames of Colombia, Afro-Colombians who live among mestizos may be judged as having no ethnicities, in short, with no culture.

be in the way 'mestizaje' is used as a formula that denies the existence of racial inequality (Ng'Weno, 2007; Telles & Flores, 2013). By the same token, discrimination is hidden in its intersection with class and in this process, lighter skin colours obtain symbolic importance (Koopman, 2012; Wade, 1995). I also argue that in Colombia racism is seen as a rejection and ignorance of ancestral features of indigenous or Afro-descendent legacy as well as of their contributions to Colombian identity. In this fashion, 'Colombian racial identity' appears to be discriminatory in itself and this may be subject to other ways of discrimination. These ways of discrimination seem to have their bases on whiteness-centred discourses since imaginaries of white superiority have not been removed and education appears to have supported those views (Wade, 1995, 2003).

The coexistence of features of pluri-culturality and whitening mestizaje in Colombian identity have impacted on racism in different ways (Wade, 1995). One of them refers to the fact that 'racial' differences in Colombia seem to be invisible. Thus, frequently, diversity is not really considered or it is overemphasised without clear criteria. For example, decisions in education made for the general country usually disregard minorities. Ironically, even in instances where the groups labelled as indigenous populations and Afro-Colombians have gained spaces of participation and visibility, the legal framework has been contradictorily separating them from the 'mestizo country' (Ng'Weno, 2007). Reports on the Afro-Colombians and indigenous populations' symbolic and explicit discrimination (e.g. Hooker, 2005; Ng'Weno, 2007; Williams, 2013) demonstrate that indifference towards indigenous or tribes has fuelled discrimination. From this position, Colombian racial identity fails to be inclusive. The embodiment of mestizo 'racial' identity in a whitening discriminatory ideology fosters the idea that some mestizos are lucky if they have lighter skin or that they need to reach cultural 'whiteness' as Castro-Gómez (2005a) explains.

The contradictory elements of Colombian racial identity mean that whiteness is still top of the hierarchy. Taking a step further, whereas whitening mestizo in Colombia has been accepted as the 'racial' identity of most Colombian people, inside the country people might experience symbolic privilege or inferiority depending on their darkness or lightness of their skin colour as is the case described by Telles and Flores (2013) in Brazil or feel that whiteness cultural features are overvalued. On the other hand, white privilege gained through mestizaje does not last when Colombian people face other people of other nations who look whiter or represent whiteness in any case. A good

example of this can be found in an autobiographical work made by Koopman (2012). She describes how by being called “mona, mona” (blondie, blondie) her physical appearance as a white Canadian was hyper-visible and treated with extreme respect during her stay in Colombia. On the other hand, the classification of indigenous and black as minorities grants mestizos privilege. Like studies developed in the UK (e.g. Vincent, Ball, Rollock, & Gillborn, 2013) this study addresses how education has contributed or has been influencing the accepted discrimination that appear to be part of the Colombian national identity. However, different from those studies too, discrimination is addressed here as explaining how racial structures have also produced practices of discrimination as part of the Colombian identity.

In the country, recent efforts from the national government have been more concerned with the recognition and positioning in the global sphere in various fields, as can be inferred from policy discourse and documents of education (e.g. MEN, 2013). Hence, global interests are prioritised. Consequently, and drawing on Leonardo (2002), I maintain that trying to position the country in the global sphere, while there is a contradictory racial identity, has contributed to the extension of racism at a global level to bring up new forms of discrimination. Inside the country, Vela (2012), for example, talks about three different kinds of discrimination that now exist in Colombia: racism (discrimination based on skin colour), classism (discrimination based social class) and servilism (discrimination towards oneself based on others’ superiority). That is, as suggested by Vincent et al. (2013), this makes whiteness to be the norm at the level of public policy and hence, from there, it will come to impact social practices. From these views, discriminatory conditions sidestep internal (among Colombian people of different ethnic groups) and external (Colombian people with ‘other’ nationalities) social practices of Colombians. As was previously pointed out, this seems to be the result of a racial identity rooted in whiteness. This is an aspect that needs to be explored in depth in educational practice within the educational system.

Stemming from what I have discussed so far, it can be concluded that Colombian racial identity(ies) reinforces discriminatory practices. Particularly, this practice reflects racial identity(ies) that is contradictory, and influenced by whiteness-centred ideologies. Therefore, this leads to the substitution of national values for appreciation of foreign others, a situation which is sharpened in focus when the foreign is white-western. This vision has hindered the country from following its own rhythm of development. In this respect, Escobar (2005) holds that development is a powerful discourse that operates as

a mechanism for the cultural, social and economic production of the third world. In agreement with Leonardo (2002), this discourse of development embedded in globalisation also involves whiteness-centred ideas in relation to power in western society. [This is because usually the ones involved in making decisions at a global level are those interested in preserving white supremacy \(Vincent et al., 2013\).](#) Meanwhile, inside the country, the belief in white superiority has provoked indifference and forgetfulness toward native indigenous people, despite laws and projects like ethno-education. In turn, discriminatory attitudes against indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities as well as self-contempt of Colombians in relation to the foreign other seem to be prevalent precipitators of racism. As an educator, one of the purposes of my study is to find elements specifically in educational practices that sustain, facilitate or reject these sorts of discriminatory practices. As was highlighted above, both in the historical and contemporary social practices, education has played an important role in how issues of race have been understood and addressed in the country. This fact highlights the need to examine in depth educational practices in relation to race and ‘racial’ identity. In this context, as I do next, it is necessary to start by reviewing what has come to be understood by the concept of educational practice in Colombia and more specifically reviewing how this conceptualisation justifies the need to review educational practices in relation to race.

## **Educational practices in Colombia**

There is a plethora of research on educational practices in Colombia and worldwide. However, studies of the ways in which educational practices fuel racial discourses or are influenced by racial structures are rare, especially in Colombia. In this section I will argue that there is a need to extend the discussion of educational practice to a broader view. So, power relations are clearer and their influence in educational practice. To strengthen my argument, firstly I will explain how educational practices have usually been theorised and how that theorisation suggests the need for a broader understanding of this notion. I will then move on to discuss how educational practices have been evaluated in Colombia as part of dominant discourse, and conclude by arguing that there is a need to consider educational practices as both influenced by, and impacting upon racial structures and discourses.

## **Educational Practice: Common Trends**

The literature about teachers' educational practice has been broad. Commentators have generally included many items when referring to teachers' practice. Despite the diversity in these categories, teachers' own action or instruction in the classroom has not only been common, but overemphasised focus on research (see e.g. Alexander, 2000; Wallace, 1999). Teachers' practice, teachers' action or professional action, and pedagogical practice (Schön, 1983) have all been categories used to refer to the action that defines the teachers' profession (see e.g. Alexander, 2000; Brooke, Manwell, & Green, 2012; Jeffries & Maeder, 2011; Johnson, 2009; Phomphum, Thongthaw, & Zeichner, 2013; Smeets E & Mooij, 2001; Wallace, 1999; Zhu, 2013). Although practices are deemed complex and considered to have psycho and sociological factors, it seems that these practices have also been oversimplified in research and treated as the teaching task in the classroom. In fact, when researching teachers' educational practice, it has frequently been criticised because it appears to be treated as a combination of tasks that are both mechanical and instrumental (Hammersley & Nias, 1999; Jeffries & Maeder, 2011; Marshall, 1999; Murray, 2012; Ramirez, 2008; Troman, 1999) which are additionally, scrutinised predominantly from the individuality of the teachers' performance. For instance, although Alexander (2000) presents teaching as related to culture, teachers' practice in his case emphasises experience within the classroom. Teachers' techniques, lesson planning, material testing, classroom management and classroom rules are examples of what is embedded in his concept of teachers' educational practice.

Other authors like Crookes (2003) hold wider views of teachers' educational practices when he explains that teaching practice obtains real sense when it is bound to a teachers' own philosophy of teaching. By considering the importance of the teachers' philosophy of teaching, this author sheds some light on the understanding of teaching enterprises as going beyond instruction. However, he does not deeply explore other elements outside the classroom that can provide meaning to a personal philosophy of teaching. Educational practice has therefore been conceptualised in different ways that discuss predominantly what happens in the classroom context by formal instruction (Lortie, 1975). The type of questions this raises has to do with the extent to which teachers' practice has been approached as a set of techniques which are fixed and structured disregarding the social context, the historical moment and the elements of

power that may give its sense. In the next section I will discuss how the theorisation of educational practices has already shown the importance of studying them in relation to broader contexts and areas to understand them better. In this context, race, provides one way of understanding how power relations sustain unequal developments.

### **Defining Teachers' Educational Practice**

In relation to the previous point, teachers' educational practice can be defined as a myriad of actions that are developed by a professional teacher which come to make sense when reflection of contextual and situational elements is undertaken (Johnson, 2009; Murray, 2012; Wallace, 1999). Some have stated in this view that missing reflections on those aspects could be one of the reasons why educational practices might result in routinisation. While these contextual and situational elements are significant, there are other viewpoints that consider other elements of educational practice that can also be considered and which add complexity to them. For example, Korthagen, (2001) discusses the need to understand practice in relation to knowledge. In this regard, he claims that teachers' practice has frequently been assumed to be detached from knowledge (Korthagen, 2001), something that he justifies as derived from a technical rationality assumed in the epistemological position for education and research (Korthagen, 2001; Schön, 1983). Britzman (1991) builds on this idea, claiming that the division has also caused various dichotomies such as: theory and practice, knowing and being, thought and action, knowledge and experience, technical and existential, the objective and the subjective. Consequently, there is a polarisation that causes fragmentation affecting teacher education, curricular procedures and orientations. In relation to this, Tsui (2003) asserts that educational practice is a unit which cannot be separated from the teachers' knowledge and this is why the teaching practice should be understood as a whole. While understanding teaching practice as a whole is an important contribution made by Tsui (2003), other authors continue claiming that there are other elements that need to be taken into account for its understanding. Therefore, I will now refer to wider views of teachers' educational practice.

### **Wider views of Teachers' Educational Practice**

In a more comprehensive definition of teachers' practice, in agreement with Tsui (2003) ideas, Britzman (1991) claims that there is a need of a multi-dimensional outlook of

teachers' educational practice. In her view, teachers' practices relate not only to a comprehension of the knowledge involved in the teaching practice such as: the knowledge of the subject matter, the knowledge of the learner, the knowledge of the curriculum and the pedagogical knowledge (Shulman in Tsui, 2003) but teachers' practices must also be seen as the materialisation of the teachers' subjectivity because there is a lot of the teacher's self in what s/he does. In turn, teachers' subjectivity condenses the socio-cultural aspects involved in the environment (Carrascal & Rotela, 2009; Iregui, Melo, & Ramos, 2006; Tilano, Henao, & Restrepo, 2015). Those social and cultural aspects are part of the narratives that make up teachers' beliefs. In the same vein, Lortie (1975) and Korthagen (2001) maintain that teachers' practices make sense as long as they are connected with teachers' world views and emotions, that is, to their subjectivity. By the same token, educational practice is linked to other concepts like teachers' experience and identity. These constructs, therefore, define teachers' ethos and pre-conceptions (Lortie, 1975).

To complicate the matter further, educational practices have lately been referred to as situated, imprecise and changeable (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998; Korthagen, 2001; Schön, 1983). This definition is an attempt to explain educational practices as holistic. One of the main features of educational practices understood as holistic and socio-culturally laden implies the idea of changeability. In this view, teachers' educational practices are varied because of the social conditions. They are developed in a particular environment and are immersed in different historical moments. Bearing in mind the particularity of the moment and the place in which educational practices happen, this could be described as a comprehensive view of teachers' educational practice (Britzman, 1991). However, I argue that teachers' educational practice still needs to account for other conditions that may influence their performance and understanding. In other words, I consider that it is necessary to revise other factors that impact educational practices prominently and that affect their process. I point out these factors as structural issues that need to be considered. For now, I review how educational practices have been explored in the context of Colombia and argue that this requires a connection with the views of race and education.

### **Teachers' educational practices in the context of Colombia**

Although studies of educational practices in Colombia have not been different from the worldwide perspective focused on individual techniques and instrumentalisation (e.g.

Barrantes, 2001; Carrascal & Rotela, 2009; Peñaranda-Correa, Bastidas-Acevedo, Escobar-Paucar, Nicolás Torres-Ospina, & Arango-Córdoba, 2006) in the country, there has been a contemporary body of research that has claimed that practices in the country are driven by dominant ideologies (Federici et al., 2017; Libreros, 2002; Quiceno, 2003; Tamayo Valencia, 2007). Some of the discussions have pointed to neo-liberal ideologies, marketing ideologies and political slogans as part of these dominant discourses (Federici et al., 2017). As described above, it appears that relations of power have taken place historically in the establishment of education in Colombia and permeated social practices. These discourses have formed what Said (1976) called regimes of power that have created an illusion of reality. This is how investigating whiteness centred discourses, as one of those discourses of power, came to be of interest in this project. To describe how race structures may have impacted the construction of racial identity in teachers' educational practice is of particular interest to me. In order to illustrate this point better, the following section includes a brief contextualisation of how educational practices in Colombia could be understood as embedded in racial structures and how this understanding stresses the need to identify more closely aspects of discrimination.

By looking at the educational practices in Colombia as mediated by curricular proposals and policies as well as by the general structure of education, it becomes apparent that these educational practices have privileged what Leonardo (2002); Banks (2002); J. King (1991) and Gillborn (2010) have referred to as whiteness-centre discourses. That is, as well as has happened in historical accounts, curricular knowledge and educational practices have been focused towards giving a privileged position to whiteness (Leonardo & Norton, 2014). This is also reflected today since under the guidance of international entities and alliances such as The Organisation for the Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), The British Council (BC) or The World Bank which usually represent 'white' ideologies and interests, the country has contradictorily set up an education system that disregards local pluri-culturality whilst promoting (white) homogenisation at the same time (Zuniga, 1979). Although this has historically affected the country, globalisation has brought major dependence on 'imported' educational models and policies that, as Libreros (2002) suggests, are implemented without enough comprehension or critical reflection. It follows that these models and policies appear to have come to sway the configuration of a national 'racial-cultural' identity through educational practices that are full of contradictory features. On the one hand, this identity claims for local pluri-cultural recognition, while on the



other hand it fosters homogeneity underlying white superiority. This white superiority is reflected in the standards that are stated by nations with a different socio-economic and cultural reality and the objectification of pedagogy as science (Federici et al., 2017). As a consequence, this emphasis on keeping up with the developments of other countries seems to be in conflict with the goals of education that enhance an identity linked to local ethnic and multicultural understanding.

The identity of Colombia as a pluri-cultural country as has been established in the National Constitution (Colombia, 1991) or the general law of education (MEN, 1994) seems to be attached to a view of nationalism rooted in multi-culturality and ethnic recognition. However, the global desires in terms of the general goals of education in the national educational policies and procedures show a different picture. *As seen in Walton et al. (2018), the curriculum fails to meet the needs of ethnically, culturally and socially. Diversity is seen as a separated element of curriculum and ethnicity is essentialised (see chapter 6 for further discussion) (Jabbar & Mirza, 2017).* In this scenario, as local researchers such as Guerrero and Quintero (forthcoming), Libreros (2002) and Ramirez (2008) have pointed out, teachers struggle when trying to define their educational practices in this context. While they have been called to follow educational policies that are highly influenced by whiteness-centred discourses, educational policies and documents emphasise the need to stress the local pluri-cultural racial identity of Colombia. This panorama stresses the need to study the role of educational practices in the formation of a Colombian ‘racial’ identity(ies) and more particularly to disentangle the elements involved from the view of race.

## Conclusion

This chapter makes a review of the racial situation of Colombia from a historical viewpoint and the role of education in relation to race. It provides a general picture of how racial identity emerged and evolved in the country and how that has impacted the social practices of Colombian people. *In doing so, the role of education is to understand how it has supported the construction of Colombian racial identity.* This chapter also outlines the factors that have come to bear in the *construction* of racial identities of the country. It is also suggested that education has subsidised practices of racism that are accepted and judged as normal. Although there have been radical changes in the country regarding the historical development of racial identity in comparison to the contemporary circumstances, discriminatory practices seem to have prevailed in subtle

and accepted ways. Further to this, a revision of how educational practices have been theorised is presented as well as how this brings to finally justify the development of this study linking racial identity with education and more concretely, educational practices in Colombia.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **Introduction**

My general intention in this project is to analyse the construction of racial identity in teachers' perspectives is an attempt to identify how they, as individuals, interact or negotiate, 'if at all', with racial structures to develop their own educational practices. This facilitates the understanding of how those possible interactions and negotiations influence the constructions of racial identities in their own educational practices. After a review of the historical and racial situation shown in the previous chapter, I now set out my theoretical framework. This is done by identifying the theoretical tools which are useful to examine the constructions of racial identity that are found in teachers' interpretations of educational practice.

This chapter starts by explaining what racial identity is and explains in more detail the gaps of knowledge that this study attempts to fill. I innovatively draw on three main theories: postcolonialism (a theory that explains the effects of colonies in their related territories), Critical Race Theory (CRT) (A structural theory of race) and whiteness (a CRT related theory that explains the structures of a society levelled in relation to white privilege), arguing that combining these theories can allow an exploration of Colombian identity configuration from a historical, critical and structural perspective. I make the case that a combination of these theories facilitates the unearthing of underexplored features of racial identity. I specifically point out that whiteness or CRT as theories have not been used to analyse educational practices in Colombia in previous work. Despite the fact that some studies from the view of postcolonialism have referred to whiteness to some extent, this remains an unexplored area of studies of educational practice in

Colombia. I end the chapter by explaining why it is necessary for this exploration to have a multi-level description of educational practices that goes beyond what teachers do in the classroom to include other levels of education such as policy and curriculum and media. At the same time, this also facilitates the analysis educational practices in relation to race.

## **Racial identity**

Racial identity is the main concept explored in this research. A view of race as a social construction, as explained in chapter 2, allows us both to talk about a 'racial' identity but also to attempt to find its shape and components. When defining racial identity, there is a difference between essentialist and non-essentialist views. The former view maintains that it is possible to talk about a static racial identity with authentic characteristics that do not change across time or place. The latter focuses on a fluid racial identity constituted by differences and common characteristics that do change across time and place (Carbado & Gulati, 2003; Vass, 2014; Woodward, 1997). In both views, racial identity is attached to the subjective experience of each individual regarding a sense of identification. However, this sense of identification in the non-essentialist view is more flexible and fluid as well as strategic while in the essentialist view changeability is neglected. As I argued in the previous chapter, in great part of the Colombian literature of education there appears to be an understanding of race as essentialised. Therefore, there is a need to examine race in Colombia as a social construction. Although race is recognised as socially constructed, it is often perceived as natural, static and fixed. Critical theories such as postcolonialism, CRT and whiteness studies allow us to understand how racial structures are formed, how they evolve as social constructions and their socio-economic, cultural and political implications.

Studies on race as such in Colombia have been scarcely developed. Only recently (about two decades ago) has there been any interest (Leal & Arias, 2007). Despite this short span of time, with the aim to find potential areas of research, Villegas (2014) produced a review of studies that have addressed the relationship between race and nation. According to that report, there have been mainly studies developed as socio-historical interpretations. Within those, there are debates based on the normativisation and its critique in the formation of subjects, the discussion of mestizaje and its ambivalence, and links between territory and difference in which regional and local perspectives are

included. Foucault and his concepts of governmentality, bio politics, archaeology and genealogy seemed to be largely the basis for the analysis of some of those areas. Foucauldian thinking also seems to be the basis of theoretical arguments developed by several postcolonialists and critical discourse analysts taken in this study (e.g. Castro-Gómez, 2005; Mignolo, 2000; Said, 1976; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). For instance, stemming on the genealogical analysis of discourse, Wetherell and Potter's (1992) proposal was useful to situate the discourse of race and education in Colombia. Despite Foucauldian concepts (such as power, the microphysics of power, normalizing judgment and others) (Foucault, 2001, 2012) being suitable in my analysis, these concepts were used more appropriately as part of the basis to other concepts and analysis developed by postcolonial theoreticians (e.g. epistemic violence, the colonality of power). In addition to this, the structural view of race relations made my theoretical framework more useful to understand relations of power in educational practices in relation to race. Postcolonialism and other theories such as historical anthropology, discourse analysis and feminism have been used in some studies addressing race before (e.g. Almarío García, 2013; Lasso, 2009; Safford, 1991). However, there is no evidence that education has been addressed using those theories; let alone using CRT and whiteness.

While Foucauldian studies have been applied to race and nation formation, postcolonial studies have focused on the complexity of race identity formation and citizenship. In a review of the literature as well as in Villegas' report, there are very few studies related to education, and there is not direct reference to the theories that have been employed. Race in general and more specifically in education is a young area of research in Colombia. Drawing on this account, I propose to address the topic of race by combining postcolonialism, CRT and whiteness in educational practices. Differently from Foucauldian analysis, my study is not interested in the relations of power as such, it is instead focused on unmasking race structures through the analysis of power relations involved in educational practices. By concentrating on the development of race as a social construction, CRT and whiteness add theoretical elements to the research already carried out in postcolonial studies to understand the area of racism as a system that operates in society. This view entails that racism is structural rather than just developed in aberrant or violent acts of racism. Studying education under this theoretical framework might facilitate to unveil elements that have been underexplored by educational theories in previous studies of dominant discourses. This would be a contribution to understanding the political dimension of the field and how, in the

complex context of hybridisation which has been amply researched by postcolonialists, racial categories seem to still play a role in the formation of identity through education.

Postcolonialism, CRT and whiteness assume that racial identities are formed on the basis of race as a social construction. Most of these theories reject any attempt to verify 'race' as real, they reject parameters of superiority and inferiority derived from those beliefs and they also interrogate the social practices that are product of those ideas. In order to understand better how those theories are connected in this research, I now explain them and underline their own principles, differences and convergences. I will show how these theories can strengthen one another considering the context of this study to understand the construction of identities in educational practices.

## **Combining Postcolonial, Whiteness and Critical Race theories**

This project uses Critical Race Theory, whiteness and postcolonialism as theoretical bases to analyse the narratives of teachers' educational practices. It seeks to identify the socio-cultural, historical, economic and political aspects that might have an impact on teachers' constructions of 'racial' identity in Colombia. The aforementioned theories help to scrutinise the subjectivity that seems to be part of teachers' discourses about race and educational practices in relation to a general (socio-economic, cultural) context. I argue that using these theories is a way to evaluate the rhetoric of racial equality in teachers' perceptions, which has served as a mantra in Colombia in general and in the field of education, in particular. In the following, I discuss each of the three theories and refer to their common points.

### **Postcolonialism**

#### ***Introduction***

Postcolonial studies are concerned with the legacy of colonialism and particularly with how this historical event legitimises discourse which 'supports the hegemony of those who colonised and constructed inferiority over those who were colonised' (Bradbury, 2011 page. 44). A key aspect of postcolonial theory is a consideration of the effects of colonialism on the coloniser emphasising in the production of knowledge. Authors such as Spivak (1988); Hall (1990); Said (1976); Young (2003) and Latin-Americans Castro-Gómez (2005b) and Mignolo (2000), to name but a few, have discussed the influence of the representations of identities from the West. Those representations are said to have

contributed to the division in terms of binaries of superiority and inferiority as well as the influence of neoliberal views of society and policies in the construction of 'others.' The contributions of these postcolonial authors will be considered in my analysis in order to understand the different layers of racial identity and its relationship with educational practices. This section discusses the main tenets of postcolonial theory that serve the purpose of this project. I also discuss the ways in which postcolonialism may work in collaboration with CRT.

### ***Postcolonial main views***

The field of study of postcolonialism has been broad and there have also been many different areas of study (Castro-Gómez, 2005b). It would be a mistake to describe postcolonialism as a coherent body clearly identified and with specific objectives (Selden, Widdowsson, & Brokker, 1993; Young, 2003). However, it is possible to say that postcolonial theories essentially work in two different ways: i) in the attempt to make visible the power dynamics in the configuration of identities in the colonised territories after their independence and ii) in highlighting the connection of history with the present, in the struggles concerned with global and local discourses fighting for rights and democracy (Subedi & Daza, 2008). Although the authors in this field have common areas of concern, they attempt to solve different kinds of problems. Some of them have focused on the cultural dimensions of postcolonialism, others on the socio-economic factors and some others on the understanding of identity formation in the frame of globalisation. In turn, postcolonial academics have also defined their interests differently. For instance, Mignolo (2005) situates postcolonialism as a movement to understand the knowledge-subject beyond race, gender or class. To this end, the author talks about emancipation from the legacy of ego-politics towards a bio-politics of knowledge. He asserts that knowledge centred in ego-politics is the one created by the west pretending to be objective in their benefit while bio-politics of knowledge introduces subjectivity and consists of reintroducing categories that ego-politics had overridden in order to reanalyse a phenomenon. Spivak (1988) grounds her work on the relevance of the ideology that works on the population to keep some of them as subaltern. Subaltern is a term that this author adopted from Gramsci to refer to those who are marginalised but usually without authority to speak, and are kept in a state of struggle by societal conditions (Spivak, 1988). Her work is oriented to theorise how subalternity happens and, in her view, ideology and dominant discourses seem to

underpin these practices. In a similar discussion, Said (1976) illustrates how ideology is not only a matter of politics of the nation states but also a practice that is anchored in the cultural practices of intellectuals such as writers, anthropologists or artists as well as in social institutions such as the church, schools or media. His contribution expands ideas of representations that have emerged from what he called 'orientalism'.

Orientalism is a stylistic way of representing the orient as an exotic, deviant, variant of the occident, and functions for ideological domination (Subedi & Daza, 2008). From different perspectives, these authors, as postcolonial intellectuals, have contributed to allowing a clear-eyed view of how colonisation constructed a world vision for the colonised peoples. This perspective is especially relevant for this study on Colombia, a previously colonised country.

Postcolonial studies in Latin-America differ greatly from the ones developed by American based academics such as Said, Babba and Spivak (Quijano as cited in Castro-Gómez, 2005b). Quijano maintains that even though the purpose of any postcolonial study is to decolonise (i.e. to liberate from west hegemonies), studies especially by those three mainstream authors cannot achieve that purpose. According to Quijano (as cited in Castro-Gómez, 2005b), this failure happens because their studies have departed from the same logic; the logic of the west. He claims instead that in order to truly decolonise, it is necessary to think from a different logic, a logic that rescues what the world was before colonisation. From a more conciliatory point of view, however, Castro-Gomez (2000) argues that raising awareness of how the west hegemonies operate in the colonised identities can be considered a form of decolonisation. This implies that the work developed by mainstream postcolonial scholars enter in dialogue with the work done in Latin America.

Thus, I draw on both: the commonalities regarding the study of identity in the work of the western postcolonial theorists such as Said, Spivak, Young and Hall, and the work of Latin-American post-colonial scholars such as Castro-Gomez and Mignolo to inform this study. These postcolonial theorists claim that colonialism organised the world into active subjects (generally the west) and passive objects (generally the east) where the first group appears to have acquired long-term benefit while the second one remains in the margins. Critical of this uneven relationship, Castro-Gomez (2000) adopts the notion of 'epistemic violence' which he describes as the possession of individuals' mind-set that commands people's ideational world. Since this concept is central for my

analysis on the teachers' constructions of racial identity, I now turn to discuss it in detail.

### *Epistemic violence*

Epistemic violence is essential to postcolonial theory. It refers to forms of power anchored in forms of knowledge (Said, 1976). Although referred to by others with different labels (e.g. coloniality of power by Quijano as cited by Castro-Gómez (2005b), the concept in general criticises the power installed in knowledge that has affected the subjectivities of the colonised. In postcolonialists' discussions about epistemic violence, there is a prevalent combination of two elements: knowledge and power. Castro-Gomez (2000) deems that epistemic violence is the notion that describes how the west is positioned thanks to colonisation while this power has provided the privilege to 'other' the one who is different. The fact that the concept has been assigned the negative idea of violence seems to be associated with imposition, inequality and asymmetric relations. From this view, knowledge is said to have tweaked perceptions so as to understand the world immersed in a single reality (in the view of the West). In this sense, anything that is not in that single view of reality is demonised, or qualified as incorrect or inferior. In turn, this form of epistemic (in)validation allows abuse and exploitation. Said (1976) as well as Spivak (1988) explain how epistemic violence has worked as a facilitator to legitimise socio-economic practices of oppression from the 'first world' over the so-called third world. Nonetheless, those practices are not perceived as negative because people are seduced by their interest installed in the discourses of progress and power of the 'first world'. This illustration shows why knowledge and power combined engrained the general idea of epistemic violence.

Several postcolonial studies have considered the influence of epistemic violence on the general configuration of Colombian identity. The most significant appears to be by Castro-Gómez (2005a) who refers to historical reviews of identity in which he described the current Colombian citizen as a subject that has been constituted in a 'whiteness device' that elevates European values over others of indigenous and black identities. As a postcolonial writer, his view is critical of how the west's domination informs an understanding of who and what Colombians are today. Although his work is not in the field of education, it represents a close approximation to the purpose of this project. His main point has been the idea whiteness as a device of epistemic violence that is embedded in the collective imaginary of Colombian ethnic identity. Although



Castro's contribution has been a reflection on race, the relation of that with the prevailing conceptions of well-defined 'racial'/ethnic identities have not sufficiently been considered in Education. In this sense, it is necessary to explore those conceptions of identity. Critical Race Theory centres attention on those aspects that are particular to singular racial identities in relation to discrimination; aspects that postcolonial theory appears to approach but have not discussed entirely as part of a structural system. This means that postcolonial theory and CRT become important cooperating theories in order to analyse the configuration of identities in Colombia in terms of race and their role in educational practices structurally. This leads to the questions addressed in the following section: how is CRT connected to postcolonialism and more importantly, what is CRT?

### ***Racial identity and the Postcolonialist look: connections with CRT***

The scenario of western ideological domination is where the discussion of racial identities and postcolonial theories find common ground. Racial theorists like Frantz Fanon (1986) deem that racialisation is a result of colonisation. In the same vein, Hall (1990, p. 10) makes the case that 'external bodily differences have been historically imbued with notions of absolute moral and cultural difference from the earliest encounters of European travellers with exoticised 'others'. External appearance has become the bodily indicator of internal features, attitudes and beliefs which are seen as immutable, fixed and inseparable from notions of (white) superiority and (black) inferiority'. Edward Said (1976, p.12) further asserts that otherness is a creation of the west and that this ideational creation plays the role of control in the exchange of diverse kinds of power with political power (with colonial and imperialist establishment); intellectual power (with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy or policies); cultural power (with orthodoxies or canons of taste, and values) and moral power (with ideas about what we do and what they can do and understand as we do). In interrogating the role of the west, great numbers of postcolonial studies have been developed from the perspective of the organisation of society in a structural (racial) approach, which is a similar theoretical perspective as that of CRT. In order to better understand this relationship of postcolonialism and CRT, the next section will set out the general principles of CRT and how they, supplemented with the postcolonial ideas, relate to the situation of racial configurations that is centre of analysis in the context of this research.

## **Critical race theory**

### ***Introduction***

CRT identifies racial inequality in all social structures. This section sketches the origins of CRT, how it has evolved and how its elements are relevant in this research. As discussed in this section, CRT originated in the USA. In that country, 'race' was used as a policy of segregation separating blacks and whites under the idea of blood purity (Koopman, 2012). Because of this background, the application of CRT in the US may appear obvious. At the same time, the application of this theory may also seem quite odd in the case of Colombia where race has been an avoided category in the legal framework after independence (see chapter 2). This radical difference of contexts does not prevent CRT from being an important theoretical tool in this research. I would argue that even though the ways race has been approached have evolved differently in these two countries, very similar symbolic power has been created in the popular culture and assigned to 'racial' groups in both countries (see further on this in chapter 2). In fact, the use of this theory constitutes an innovative contribution to render racial structures visible, something that previous studies on education and race in the country have not acknowledged, as discussed in the literature review chapter. In this context, the principles that are more appropriate to the Colombian context and specifically to the purpose of this research are taken into account in the following description.

### ***Beginnings and evolution of CRT***

CRT is one of the recent approaches to race research that originates in the USA in the 70's. This relatively new movement was initiated by activists that were interested in renovating the connexion between race, racism and power (R. Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). Scholars within this line of thought are interested in analysing the philosophy and the devices of discourse that work to re-create and legitimate social structures (Tate, 1997 as cited by Chadderton, 2009). CRT is used to revise and is defined as "a framework that can be used to theorize, examine and contest race and racism as boundaries that impact social practices and that need to be dismantled (Yosso, 2005).

CRT scholars in general hold that even though people think racism is eradicated now, it continues to blight the lives of people of colour, as has been documented in the USA (R. Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). In particular, the experience of discrimination and oppression is important (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006; Yosso, 2005). This is the reason

why one of the emphases of its methodological approach is based on counter story telling. Counter story telling as a strategy looks to rescue the experiences of people who have lived marginalised and oppressed lives. The importance of acknowledging these stories is the dismantling of discriminatory experiences that have been developed as a 'common practice' (Leonardo, 2002; Sleeter, 2004). Early debate in CRT focused on the boundaries of Black and White, but it has lately been extended to other populations and other experiences that may have been affected by the same structures. This explains why now in addition to CRT; other related theories have emerged. These include Latcrit (Latin CRT), Asiancrit (Asian CRT), femcrit (Feminist CRT), tribalcrit (Tribal CRT) and whitecrit (White CRT). These related theories are not exclusive, CRT in itself accounts for intersectionality among them (Yosso, 2005).

CRT started in the field of law but has become popular in education to explain school hierarchies, control, and controversies about policy as well as curriculum, history and IQ testing (R. Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Yosso (2005, p. 74) defines CRT in education as "a theoretical and analytical framework that challenges the ways race and racism impact educational structures, practices, and discourses" and as a social justice project towards liberatory practices in school. According to Ladson-Billings and Gillborn (2004), CRT helps scholars to view racism in education in terms of the distortions and omissions of curriculum in the way instruction considers practices as neutral; in the way deficiency indexes determine individuals at risk; and in the way assessment mechanisms legitimise perceived deficiency under criteria of scientific rationalism (Leonardo & Norton, 2014). The application of CRT in education has generated a new stage in research in which structural racism has been found to be linked with social problems in which education is involved (e.g. Leonardo & Norton, 2014; Rollock et al., 2015). This is evident in the case of Bradbury (2013) where she shows that students in the nursery system of the UK experience discrimination through standardised evaluation. Her study makes it evident that child carers take the established criteria for evaluation as an objective reality that must be achieved, rather than as a possibility that can support the complexity of the learning process. From this perspective, students who are not found to meet the criteria are thought to be irregular, therefore, 'not-normal'. This type of studies throws light on the purpose of this research exploring configurations of racial identities in educational practices as well as the effects of those constructions on the practice itself.

### *CRT principles*

According to Creswell (2007); Leonardo and Norton (2014); Rollock et al. (2015) and others, CRT has three goals: 1) to challenge social structures by presenting stories of race from the perspective of people of colour; 2) to argue for the eradication of racial discrimination; and 3) to address other areas of difference in addition to race such as gender, class and inequities experienced by individuals. The purpose of this study does not directly point to solve problems of marginalisation as proposed in these CRT goals. Here this theory works as an analytical tool to reveal racial structures that have emerged as a cause or a consequence of educational practices. For this reason, I will limit the description of the basic CRT principles to those more relevant for the purposes of this research.

It is worth noting that although CRT stands on basic underlying principles which coincide in their descriptions, such principles are not always named in the same way (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; R. Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2005). Thus, the following list of principles may have been identified differently in other sources.

1. Race is a social construction.
2. Racism is deeply ingrained in social structures.
3. Reality is perceived partially.
4. The system subsidises white privilege.
5. Colour blindness is a fallacy.

As discussed at length at the beginning of this chapter, the first principle means that ‘race’ is created and supported in social practices. “Although physical differences among groups are a reality, race is a way to construct what they mean for the purpose of social organisation”, (Leonardo & Norton, 2014, p. 4). Thus, CRT stems from the idea that race is socially constructed in order to take account of both the ways in which racialisation happens and its social effects. From this principle, this theory interrogates inequality and seeks social transformation.

The second principle considers racism as objectified in economic, social or cultural practices affecting social groups and institutions (Leonardo & Norton, 2014). Rather than focusing only on particular practices of racism, CRT analyses those particular practices as part of institutional and structural racism because social institutions develop norms that shape people’s behaviours and values. That is to say, because of the way

society is organised or because of the social practices which are orchestrated in power relations, some 'racial' groups may find themselves in privilege while others may come to be marginalised. One of the approaches that CRT proposes to unveil racial structures is by understanding any social interaction in the wider social, cultural, political and historical context (Bonnett, 2000; Clarke & Garner, 2009; Omi & Winant, 1993). The historical account of Colombian configuration of racial identity, developed in chapter 2, is a good example of how this type of review can be a useful frame of analysis to understand social structures. As shown, the revision of the development of the country from colonisation to independence reveals that the social organisation had a political justification which consequently impacted what and how Colombian society is today. This is one way that CRT proposes to identify social structures.

The third principle has to do with the notion of 'dysconsciousness' (J. King, 1991), which highlights that although reality is subjective there is a tendency to approach it objectively. This principle underscores that, as reality is socially constructed, there is never only one perspective of what we see (Carbado & Gulati, 2003; R. Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). In this fashion, awareness of dysconsciousness of the various forms in which reality can be understood leads us to explore different points of reference in the understanding of social phenomena. For this study, this principle helps to observe the extent to which different perspectives are (not) considered in the ways Colombian racial identity is constructed in educational practice, from the teachers' perspectives.

The fourth principle originates from the idea that non-whites may achieve some degree of social, economic, political and cultural progress only to the extent that such progress responds to white elites' interest and although there has been progress, achievement is still inadequate and incomplete (Leonardo & Norton, 2014). This is what is also referred to as 'interest convergence' (Carbado & Gulati, 2003; R. Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). From the view of CRT scholars, this progress is usually promoted at individual level as this contributes to maintain the status quo by not really endorsing structural changes. Studies conducted in the US about specific Afro-American leaders who succeeded found that the progress of these individuals met the interests of white Americans; as a consequence, pervading racial inequalities were maintained instead of social transformation (Banks, 2002; R. Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). In this study, this principle helps to see how in Colombia, national policies may have been used as a place for interest convergence. This is important because as seen in chapter two, the alliances that Colombia has established with other countries and international organisations has

created new standards and new goals of social development that have been created in terms set out by foreign goals.

The fifth principle deals with the claim that everyone can be equal on the basis of skin colour or 'race'. CRTs are suspicious of colour blind ideas firstly because they reduce the race problem to a matter of skin colour and secondly because colour-blindness regularly overlooks the fact that rights can be conflicting between powerful elites and minorities. By covering disadvantage with colour blind attitudes based on liberalism, neutrality and meritocracy, racial structures remain prevalent (Chadderton, 2009; DeCuir & Dixon, 2004). This idea of colour blindness usually encourages individualism, which separates and alienates rather than includes. Viewing the context of Colombia from this angle, colour blind ideas have mainly been evident in the ways policy makers have addressed globalisation. New policies seem to present colour-blind embedded in liberalism, neutrality and meritocracy as requirements to reach progress and development for the country (Libreros, 2002). Such policies also emphasise the effort of individuals that encourage them to change their future beyond values of solidarity and community (Miñana & Rodríguez, 2003).

Focusing on people's experiences is one of the main tools to unveil racial discrimination. It is in this sense that CRT is one of the focal theories in this project. [People experience 'race' as real and based on this, they may experience exclusion, discrimination and indifference \(Vincent et al., 2012\).](#) In the Colombian case, for example, despite the fact that nowadays the country is implementing policies of recognition of ethnic minorities, this is hardly mirrored in social, cultural and economic practices as described in chapter 2. Studies show that ethnic minorities are not only perceived as backwards but that they are also victims of poverty and displacement (e. g. Hooker, 2005; Ng'Weno, 2007). In this context, CRT becomes useful to understand the factors that cause the apparent 'un-equal' conditions of policy and help to determine the reasons why there are gaps between policy and practice.

There are limitations in working with CRT. Chadderton (2013), for instance, specifies that CRT tends to essentialise ethnic identities and therefore, implies an unrealistic homogeneity. This is an aspect that contributes to discrimination in other terms (Weedon, 2004). In relation to this idea, another criticism considers that race theories reify the concept of race and end up reproducing it (Dumont, 2001). Despite these criticisms, I argue that using this theory in the context of Colombia is a chance to theorise rather than describe 'race' as has already been done (Chadderton, 2013;

Villegas, 2014). Consequently, this study can actually be seen as an opportunity not only to call for a political project as is the main purpose of CRT, but also as an opportunity to understand nuances in the complexities of race configuration in social practices. These arguments will achieve gains in a context where these aspects have been rarely explored. This point is more emphatically explained in relation to the notion of whiteness which is an underexplored area in research. Thus, I will return to it after I discuss the general principles of this notion.

## **Whiteness**

### ***Introduction***

In contrast to other race studies, whiteness focuses on white identities, white supremacy and white superiority. It specifically tackles social relations that are mediated by the metanarrative of whiteness as superior (Bonnett, 2000; Clarke & Garner, 2009; Gillborn, 2010; Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2004; Leonardo, 2002; Sleeter, 2004). This section explains what whiteness is about and its evolution. I argue that whiteness in the particular context of Colombia serves as a tool to understand power relations that are enmeshed in the configuration of racial identity(ies) in educational practices. With the structural perspective as well as the critical position this theory assumes, it facilitates the understanding of socio-economic, political and cultural factors that have been hidden in the racial configurations in social practice and how that has impacted educational practice. Supported by postcolonial studies and CRT, whiteness provides a wider view of identity, in terms of highlighting racial features and factors of white domination.

### ***Whiteness, definitions and directions***

Whiteness is viewed as a construct that permeates social practices in which groups identified as white obtain symbolic power (e.g. Bonnett, 2000). It can also be considered a theory that can explain underlying values of social practices that are determined by parameters of inferiority and superiority (R. Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Gillborn & Youdell, 2009; Leonardo, 2002). CRT takes whiteness as a conceptual reference point to explain conditions of subordination of different groups (e.g. R. Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

Whiteness has been also defined as a conceptual category that has emerged from racism, colonialism and enlightenment (Ladson-Billings & Gillborn, 2004; Omi & Winant, 1993; Vass, 2014). Previous research has indicated that whiteness is a discourse that has come to classify society by skin colours and, in this classification, non-whites have become socially burdened (Bonnett, 2000; R. Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Knowles & Alexander, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Gillborn, 2004; Yosso, 2005). In turn, whiteness has become a category that allows white people a degree of taken-for-granted benefits and power. Some have even defined whiteness indifferently from white supremacy. For instance, there is a view that it is,

a political and cultural and social system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement. [The] widespread [] relations of white dominance and non-white domination are daily re-enacted across a broad array of social institutions and social settings (Ansley, 1997 as cited in Vass, 2014) p4)

According to Omi and Winant (1993), whiteness originates from the notion of race seen from a naturalistic viewpoint but progressed as an ideological category. For various race academics, whiteness implies oppression and it is not always evident as such (i.e. Leonardo, 2002; Sleeter, 2004).

Further to the classic body of work of race studies that have focused on the voice of oppressed groups, their rights and claims for human rights, whiteness researchers seek to understand the constructions of white identity in the position of privilege (Banks, 2002; Bonnett, 2000; Clarke & Garner, 2009; Gillborn, 2010; Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2004). However, unlike the classic studies of race, whiteness does not focus on marginalised groups. It is mainly concerned with the conscious and unconscious behaviour that people embodying white can have in relation to other groups as well as their perceptions of the 'other' (Clarke & Garner, 2009; J. King, 1991; Sleeter, 2004). Bonnett (2000) sets out that whiteness was an old concept that became racialised with modernism, the scientific advance and the reaffirmation of white superiority. Hence, the development of whiteness as an identity is different from other groups but probably its research embraces similar aspects used by other approaches.

Roediger (1992 as cited in Bonnett, 2000) affirms that whiteness only started to be theorised in the nineteenth (19<sup>th</sup>) century in the USA with the legal acceptance of European groups as white. Whiteness had been taken for granted as a racial category for research but it evolved indirectly when analysed in terms of comparison with



disadvantaged groups (J. King, 1991). This theory has mainly been employed in research conducted in the USA and the UK to explain issues of racism between white Europeans or Americans and people from other ‘racial’ groups (e.g. Banks, 2002; Ladson-Billings & Gillborn, 2004). Telles and Flores (2013) and Koopman (2012) represent some of the few studies done in Latin America. In Colombia, this theory is not well known and has just recently been taken as one of the theoretical tenets of research in education by Meneses (2012). In general, whiteness has not been used to analyse educational practices as noted in chapter 1 and 2. Some studies from the view of postcolonialism have referred to whiteness briefly as part of other central issues such as the analysis of subalternities (see e.g. Garzón Martínez, 2007) but it is definitely an unexplored area in studies of race and education in Colombia.

### ***Contributions***

One of the major contributions of whiteness studies is the questioning of the understanding of whiteness as neutral and universal in the construction of worldviews (R. Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Said, 1976; Spivak, 1988). Also, common in postcolonial studies, this contribution seeks to interrogate those conceptions of neutrality which consequently disregard the perspective of ‘racial’ and ethnic minorities. While there is misrecognition of some groups, whiteness appears to be superior (Bonnett, 2000; Leonardo, 2002). According to Leonardo (2002), whiteness is an attempt to homogenise diverse ethnicities into a single category for purposes of racial domination. In education, whiteness is related to postcolonial theories as it questions the neutrality given to knowledge. [For the theorists in this area, knowledge is neither devoid of biases nor something that can simply be discovered \(Leonardo & Norton, 2014\)](#)

Another important contribution from whiteness studies is found in the assertion that even though whiteness is a social construction, it tends to shape people’s realities as objective. As discussed above in the principles of CRT, this is in close connection to what J. King (1991) defines as dysconsciousness. In King’s view, this concept implies that there is a reduced or inaccurate way of thinking about social reality. It is an “uncritical habit of mind (including perceptions, attitudes, assumptions and beliefs) that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the order of things as given” (J. King, 1991, p. 73). Here we find a point of convergence with the concept of epistemic violence from postcolonial theory in that both notions are wary of the idea that an

objective reality exists. On the one hand, for postcolonialists, the illusion of an objective reality is created by the colonisation. On the other hand, in whiteness, the ‘objective’ reality is created by whiteness-centred discourses. The latter characteristic is what facilitates dysconsciousness. Whiteness studies in general conduct critiques of the objective reality but they also focus on issues of race and related concepts such as beauty, physical traits and phenotype. An illustration of this point is made by Bonnett (2000) who explains how Asian people adopted the racialised colour yellow (an invention from the west) to describe themselves, something that at the same time impedes their possible identification as white.

Last but not least, an additional contribution made by whiteness studies is concerned with addressing the marked differences between the ways in which white and non-white identities are constructed (Clarke & Garner, 2009) and how some boundaries are fluid in some cases (Vass, 2014). As I discuss below, white privilege is part of what has been considered one of the most important differences between the experiences of whiteness and other identities. Whiteness studies in this sense help to determine aspects that foreground the privilege that may be experienced by people who embody white identities or those who are understood by others as white. This concept serves as an important analytical category in my study to examine how Colombian racial identities are constructed in relation to white privilege.

### ***White privilege***

White privilege has been defined as a right to possess material and symbolic power that others do not have based on the notion of white (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006).

Taking the authors’ words, white privilege implies that whiteness is an enjoyed franchise with unquestioned benefits. It is a gained benefit from the conditions of the organisation of society. Usually this privilege is represented in material things such as access to job opportunities. In this vein, the ones that are similar are also part of that privilege, while the ones who are or look different are excluded. Some other times, this privilege is evident in terms of symbolic recognition where white groups can be free of prejudice while others are not (McIntosh, 2004). For example, the historical stereotypes of minorities seem not to be negative for the ones who embody white skin.

The concept of white privilege is an important contribution to understanding how whiteness could work in the configuration of identities in the context of Colombia. As mentioned in the previous chapter, whiteness in the country is difficult to see because of

features of mixture as well as the disbelief of 'race' difference that the ideology of mestizo produced (see discussion in the historical configuration of racial identity in chapter 2). However, by taking the concept of white privilege, these limitations are not so strong. White privilege emphasises that whiteness is a narrative that involves not only the ones that are favoured by their skin colour but also the ones that embody the whiteness values. By the same token, Leonardo (2002) asserts that one has to be careful because whiteness does not always refer to white people. He argues that whiteness as embedded in the definition of white privilege is an oppressive discourse that needs to be dismantled and white is the person who might or not embody the whiteness values. He argues this by clarifying that situating the whiteness narrative on white people is what usually happens in the narrow discourse of skin colour. Therefore, white people are often subjects of whiteness. This clarification makes it possible to see that whiteness also works as an asset that can be acquired and embodied (Telles & Flores, 2013). In the case of Colombia, white is the discourse that can apply to lighter skin colours or people who are in privilege because of the hierarchisation that mainly originated in colonialism. In this sense, the idea of white privilege shows strong links between whiteness and the main discussions of postcolonialism.

### **Whiteness in Colombia: links with postcolonialism**

As in other racial studies, whiteness may include multiple articulations depending on contextual differences and historical background (Chakrabarty, Roberts, & Preston, 2012; Gillborn & Youdell, 2009). In relation to this, Latin-American studies specifically point out that whiteness has been associated with progress, economic success, status and social capital (see chapter 2 for further discussion). In this line of thought, white privilege in Latin-America is represented not only by skin colour but also with the possession of material capital. In turn, this gives whiteness a commodity character which exchanges skin colour with status and economic power. In Telles & Flores' (2013) own words 'money whitens'. Having the idea of whiteness as a commodity can be related to discussions made in postcolonialism. According to Escobar (2005), a representative of these theorists, from colonisation the idea of development became understood only from the view of colonisers. That is, it was understood as progress and economic success. Therefore, this view, disregarded other kinds of development and relegated the development of the so-called 'third world' countries to be developed in their own rhythm. In connection with this, it can be

concluded that whiteness (as a commodity) is also desired (Bonnett, 2000; Ladson-Billings & Gillborn, 2004) and, in this view, it comes to be a constitutional feature in the constructions of racial identities. In fact, this is what Castro-Gómez (2005a) referred to as a ‘whiteness device’ in Colombian racial identity. Following Leonardo and Norton (2014), it can be argued that this whiteness device is centred in curricular knowledge, practice and relations. These ideas are crucial to the understanding of how teachers deem the importance of their practices as well as the way they consider the participants in those practices as Colombian citizens. In the light of the idea that race studies keep on contributing to uncovering racist behaviours and attitudes, whiteness represents a way to show the relevance of contemporary race studies.

### **Negotiating principles among Postcolonialism, CRT and Whiteness**

As frequently happens with different types of theories, colonialism, CRT and whiteness have also received criticism. For example, in the study of identities, postcolonialism has been criticised because it has created new binaries based on the west and the east. By the same token, CRT has received criticism for reproducing essentialised racial identities. On the one hand, the criticisms made against postcolonialism are challenged because they have developed more nuanced analysis by theorising which attempts to explain social causes of those essentialisations and based on that, the concept of hybridation has also brought other views of racial identity (e.g. Castro-Gómez, 2005a). On the other hand, CRT has also broadened its scope to study ‘race’ in intersection with other categories such as class and gender (Mirza, 1997) and has thus gone beyond the initial concerns about the binaries of black and white as essentialised. The fact that these theories have individually received these criticisms, makes clear that the study of identities is complex and what each theory does is to foreground some of the possible different layers of identity complexity.

This project also combines these theories in an attempt to fill the gaps that the application of single theories may have in the context of Colombia. In a colonised territory such as Colombia, as already noted, a theory such as postcolonialism provides relevant analytical tools to examine the configuration of racial identities from the perspective of colonialism. At the same time, postcolonialism seems to strengthen analysis drawn only from CRT and whiteness perspectives. These latter theories focus mainly on examining issues of race derived from the expansion of the ideas of enlightenment, while issues derived from colonial movements tend to be overlooked.

Similarly, considering issues of colonisation alone is insufficient to explain exclusions of race, gender or class (Dirlik as cited in Castro-Gómez, 2005b). Although the case of exclusion has been addressed in postcolonialism, CRT has a deterministic position in understanding racism as structural, something that is not always the case in postcolonialist theories. CRT facilitates the identification of asymmetrical racial positions that could explain racial and social inequalities or racisms (Ladson-Billings & Gillborn, 2004). Therefore, a combination of theoretical perspectives is used here in order to consolidate a powerful framework of analysis to attain a fuller understanding of identity construction. Central to the construction of this framework is the idea that race is originated in colonialism but reinforced in the enlightenment as these theories in conjunction advocate.

A joint framework between these theories also makes sense because these theories have different points of convergence. The following are some of the most pertinent for this study: First, these theories deal with whiteness as an imaginary concept that needs to be interrogated. Although in different degrees, they all sustain that whiteness maintains racist structures. Second, they explain the configuration of identity based on dominant discourses from the west. For all of them, these discourses have generated asymmetric relations placed in knowledge which have favoured white interests. Third, in different ways and to different extents, these theories are concerned with racial categories and the impact of those divisions on general social organisation and social practices. The main thought they share is that racial categories support social injustice and work towards its perpetuation. Fourth, they coincide in seeing that, although the biologist view of race is less frequently accepted, such a view still prevails in racist discourses and practices that have been taken for granted. Fifth, they are all critical theories that try to explain practices that are dominated by regimes of power. These are regimes of power that have usually been created by the ones in power, usually in the west. Sixth, these theories have extended the discussion of racial identities beyond the skin colour. Although this is more of a recent trend in CRT theories, it has now been widely expanded.

So far, I have explained racial identity from a socio-constructionist view which is the assumed position in this project. From that stance, I have argued that CRT, Whiteness and postcolonialism specifically provide tools to understand how boundaries of social structures are created and how they pervade in dominant discourses. This discussion is valuable to analyse how education may take part in this dynamic and how, specifically, educational practices contribute to the formation of an individual's identification. From

this perspective, I now explain the theoretical stance of educational practice that I consider necessary to be able to capture the elements involved in that environment.

## **The view of educational practices**

### ***Introduction***

As discussed in the previous chapter, educational practices have been studied mainly as technical activities that are mechanical and instrumental. From this view, power relations involved in their construction might have been disregarded. In the context of Colombia, although educational practices have been studied from wider dominant discourses, race has not been considered as one of those discourses. In this section, I argue that it is necessary to consider different levels of influence on teachers' educational practice (the micro level), by also considering policies and curriculum (the macro level) as well as culture or public pedagogies (the meso level) to understand more clearly their construction in relation to race. I also argue that to scrutinise race as influencing educational practice, it is helpful to employ a framework which draws on CRT, Whiteness and postcolonial literature. In order to develop these arguments, I first build on previous research acknowledging that there is a need to develop a broader understanding of educational practices and more specifically in the context of Colombia. I then explain how I define educational practice to favour this final goal. In light of this, I relate this definition to the theoretical underpinnings I am exploring in racial identity.

### **Educational practice: a need for a broader view**

Previous research has made clear the need to scrutinise teachers' educational practices by considering the socio-cultural factors beyond the classroom (see the discussion in educational practices section in chapter 2). This idea includes educational practices that consider relationships that in society cooperate to give sense to the purpose of education, not only at wider levels such as national but also global contexts. For example, analysing educational practices in relation to policies that are now more international (Ball, 2012). This implies that educational practices should not be seen uni-dimensionally (Kenway, 1998; Korthagen, 2001; Lortie, 1975; Tsui, 2003). That is, educational practices are not a set of techniques influenced only by the teacher addressing a pedagogical aim. Social and cultural factors make educational practices

multifaceted in the purposes of achieving different goals. These factors are part of teachers' action which along with the complexities of teacher's beliefs and knowledge complicate the teaching task (Britzman, 1991). Echoing Britzman, educational scholarship needs to recognise more emphatically that teachers' educational practices are also immersed in negotiation of identities and power relations which work as filters to convey particular meanings. Bearing these social, cultural and economic factors in mind, the act of teaching is multi-level. In other words, teaching depends on other levels for its realisation. I argue that there are also other entities transforming education such as policies, curriculum, media, technology and culture which play an important role in the shaping and transforming practice. Therefore, educational practices are socially negotiated in the circulation of power relations and all of them influence practice (Ball, et al Maguire, & Braun, 2012). Therefore, in looking at educational practices from this multi-level perspective, a more integrative view of educational practice can be reached. Also, it can shed light on how ideas are **formed** to be part of those practices. I now turn to explain what this perspective means and its relevance for this study.

### **A multi-level view of teachers' educational practices**

As explained in chapter 2, in theory and practice not only have educational practices been reduced to a series of tasks that are mechanical and instrumental, they have also tended to be seen as processes only happening in the classroom (Hammersley & Nias, 1999; Jeffrey, 1999; Marshall, 1999; Murray, 2012; Ramirez, 2008; Troman, 1999). That is why there is also scholarly work emphasising the need to understand educational practices more broadly. For instance, Britzman (1991) highlights the importance of understanding teachers' identity and Tsui (2003) underscores the role of teachers' knowledge as constitutive elements of educational practices. Even more fundamentally, critical pedagogy claims that education is necessarily a political activity through which power can be maintained or resisted (Freire, 1998; McLaren, 2013).

In this study, I propose organising a holistic view of educational practices on three levels: as **micro** (the practice itself), **macro** (policy and curriculum) and **meso** (media) levels. This approach is based on the work of Van Dijk (1995), who explores discourse and asserts that people are usually influenced by powerful social entities to develop their social cognition (ideas and imaginaries about the world). This means that by exposure to ideologies, people form ideas from which they make meaning of who they

are and where they belong. In his study, Van Dijk (1995) clearly identifies three levels of interaction: macro: public discourse; meso: popular culture discourse and micro: individual's discourse in which people make sense of reality. Within these three levels he identifies people (power members of society such as politicians, academic authorities, etc.), situations (the interaction between people and media, the learning contexts of influential personalities etc.) means (the news, books, companies) and language (expressions, metaphors, etc.) that are influential in developing public discourse and that, he evaluates, impact on popular culture and social practices.

I have translated Van Dijk's (1993) tri-dimensional approach to the context of educational practices and have stated that teachers' practice is affected by powerful macro (policy and curriculum) and meso (media) levels of educational practice. To illustrate this point, teachers interact with those powerful institutions at a **macro level** as part of their professional commitment (e.g. Interaction with policy makers or administrative staff to develop pedagogical proposals) (see Ball et al., 2012) or simply as individuals in the frame of a social context. At the same time, they also participate in the **meso** level with the societal dynamics (e.g. by watching the news or reading the newspaper). Therefore, teachers' educational practices are influenced by those ideologies circulating in the discourse of the macro and meso agents in educational practice. The ideologies that form the discourse of those institutions constitute an important basis for teachers to convey meaning in their educational practices. In the case of the configuration of racial identity in educational practices, which is the major theme of this project, this approach to educational practice helps to consider educational practice not in isolation but in conjunction with the power relations involved with discourses circulating in those levels of educational practice. In this vein, these discourses may include ideologies of racial identities influencing or negotiating not only teachers' own ideas of race but also their educational practice. [On the other hand, this approach would also favour a recognition of dominant discourses that have already been identified in studies done by CRTS \(e.g. Leonardo & Norton, 2014; Rollock et al., 2015\). Those studies shed some light on the kind of relations that I want to identify as shaping teachers' perceptions of educational practices and identities.](#) Therefore, this multi-level of educational practice enables us to understand the mechanisms that favour (or not) the construction of racial identities in teachers' educational practices.

This study therefore attempts to contribute to widening the vision of educational practice which is currently centred solely on the learning and teaching mechanisms.



Teachers' educational practice is then considered the **micro-level** of the educational practice, containing the detailed and specific action of educational practice. On the other hand, the **macro level** of educational practice comprehends the 'normativisation' involved in the institutions, curriculum and policies that frame the educational practice. The **meso-level** relates to all the popular culture participants (people or machines) that contribute to forming meanings that affect educational practices directly. For example, through the information that comes to be part of instruction in the corporation of technology in the classroom) or indirectly (by information out of the context of the educational institution which predominantly comes from students' access to media).

### **Linking of a multi-level view of educational practices with the theoretical framework**

From the perspectives of CRT, whiteness and postcolonialism, analysis of educational practices in the classroom without taking into account broader contextual elements that give sense to those practices, would not allow us to understand the mechanics of teaching practice and its connections with race. [This is because race is ingrained in social structures rather than in particular practices \(Banks, 2002; Gillborn, 2006; Leonardo, 2002; Leonardo & Norton, 2014; Sleeter, 2004\).](#) Therefore, it is also necessary to consider other factors (social, political, economic and historical) that may affect those educational practices. Studies on race and education in other contexts such as the US and the UK have already made those relationships explicit. For example, studies conducted by Gillborn and Ladson-Billings (2004), Sleeter (2004), Banks (2002), and Vass (2014), among others, suggest that discourses of education favour groups and individuals categorised as white at a macro-level (policy and curriculum). On the one hand, Gillborn (2006) in the UK has applied race approaches to education to show how the education system contributes to perpetuating discrimination in black communities. On the other hand, Giroux (1997) has suggested that culture and media have come along as complementary pedagogies to reinforce whiteness in people, by employing stereotypical images of different cultures and ethnic groups and contributing to the expansion of racism by portraying countries at a national level in disadvantage. [Other authors have added to this knowledge base by considering curricular approaches as a promoter of African-American segregation in the USA \(Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006; Leonardo & Norton, 2014\).](#) These studies, to name but a few, have contributed to

an understanding of how different levels of education have sustained racism and the prevalence of discrimination.

Since those aspects mentioned above have not been given enough attention in the context of Colombia, I have found that CRT and whiteness provide an in-depth approach to education to better understand aspects that postcolonial studies have started to explore in terms of identity configuration in Latin-Americans and the Colombian people. In turn, as these studies have been mainly situated in social sciences in general rather than in education specifically, this thesis seeks to provide another perspective of the social dynamics of education. It further seeks to interrogate the extent to which educational practices are given sufficient resources to be able to work towards a pluricultural identity that promotes inclusion and democracy, as the current national policies predict.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the key notional tools that work as a theoretical framework for the analysis of the configuration of racial identities in educational practices in Colombia. It has **been** argued that a social constructionist view of race and thus of racial identity is useful to delve deeper into the social structures that have contributed to the objectivation of race and racism, as manifested in ways teachers understand their professional practice. In tune with this view, this chapter has also explored principles of postcolonialism, CRT and whiteness in order to argue for a complementary theoretical grounding to address the complexity of racial identity construction. All these theories deal with how racial identity has been constituted in uneven relations which have been perpetuated through discourses of power. This chapter ended by elaborating why, under the tenets of those theories, educational practices need to be seen from a multi-level perspective in order to be able to foreground the power relations embedded in the complexity of identity and more specifically, in racial identity.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

Informed by CRT, whiteness and postcolonialism, this study analyses spoken teachers' discourse to approach an understanding of their perceptions of racial identity and its impact in educational practices. In this chapter, I provide an account of how the methodological approach worked to develop this qualitative study. In this vein, I explain how Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) guided the data gathering and how it oriented the analysis while working together with the mentioned theories to achieve the purposes of this study.

Based on interviews, this qualitative investigation stresses that race is a socially constructed reality which also takes a shape in the relationship between the researcher, what is studied and the situational limitations that outline the inquiry (Martinez Rizo, 2002; Scotland, 2012). This chapter starts by discussing that socio-constructionist ontology and interpretivist epistemology. Drawing on this perspective, the analysis of teachers' views highlights the instability of social reality, the influences of conditions in interaction and the acknowledgment of subjectivity. I account for the subjective position I take as a researcher by explaining that I do not attempt to state truths but to approximate an understanding of teachers' views. In light of this, I discuss how CDA offers useful methodological tools to explore teachers' perceptions of racial identity and educational practices. I also refer to more concrete methodological issues and considerations bearing in mind the theoretical framework of the study as well as more detailed procedures of data collection, analysis and implications these procedures have when researching 'race'.

#### **A social constructivist and interpretivist stance**

In this research, it is assumed that reality is not out there to be discovered, it is indeed a socio-construction (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009). Reality is seen as a human product and the result of interaction with the environment (Crotty, 1998). This socio-constructionist

stance enables this study to open the discussion on how the influence of socio-cultural aspects affect teachers' ideas of race and racial identity as well as how race takes a role in interaction (Pillow, 2003). By the same token, through this perspective it is possible to examine constructions of meaning given to racial identity in educational practices.

The socio-constructivist ontology in this study is also oriented by an interpretive epistemology in which an individual's intervention and ideas are considered subjective. That is to say, this project contemplates reality as complex and unreachable. Hence, teachers' interpretation of their practice is recognised as a single perspective of multiple possibilities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009; N. King & Horrocks, 2010). In fact, Denzin and Lincoln (2009) claim that reality is never objective since we only know reality through representations. This is why, although the role of ideology is taken into account in teachers' ideas, their views of educational practices are seen as subjective. Accepting teachers' subjectivity confirms that this research is not an attempt to provide a single truth. Instead, this project refers to teachers' perceptions of racial identity and their educational practice as an insight of the dynamics that teachers carry out to achieve their goals as educators. In connection with the basis of the theoretical framework proposed, it follows that this focus recognises the effect that social, and cultural aspects have on teachers' choices.

### **My positioning**

Going back to the story that I shared in the introduction chapter, it is possible to see how my life experience has led me to build my position in this study. The fact that I was led to racially identify myself in the USA as a member of one of multiple clearly defined racial groups puzzled me, as that is not a common practice in Colombia.

Through this experience I started to understand that reality is a social construction that may vary greatly from one context to another (Gillborn & Youdell, 2009). This suggests that reality is not natural and that truth is not universal either (Crotty, 1998). In the same vein, recognising the existence of a different reality reveals how the world is not completely seen by us. That is, as there are multiple realities, the world is just made of multiple interpretations (Crotty, 1998).

Making my position explicit is important because it explains the impact this may have on the data generated. This explicit positioning is an acknowledgement of my influence as a researcher in the data collection which is not neutral and whose perspective adds meaning to the teachers' interpretations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009; Koro-Ljungberg &

Mazzei, 2012; Pillow, 2003). While it is important not to attempt objectivity, the insights that are products of this analysis are important elements to reflect on practices that may affect the educational as well as social context. There is no intention to generalise but to provide an alternative view of participants' interpretations (N. King & Horrocks, 2010; Yeo et al., 2013).

### **Aligning methodology to the perspective of my study**

Before going into detail about CDA as a methodological tool for this project, it is relevant to acknowledge the fact that this research did not follow a smooth and straightforward path, as is the case of research in general. Actual research is a messy process in which procedures and strategies need to be modified along the way (Koro-Ljungberg & Mazzei, 2012). In light of this, my ideas of the methodology of this research were not shaped in the same way from the beginning. I had to make constant changes and amendments regarding methodological principles and procedures, which highlight what Dörnyei (2007) calls the 'emergent' nature of qualitative research. This emergent status of the research challenges objective perspectives which show research as a linear and unproblematic process. In fact, as Koro-Ljungberg and Mazzei (2012) claim, messiness is natural to research and for a more realistic view of research, such messiness needs to be made explicit.

There is not enough space in this thesis to include the variety of changes that were necessary over the course of this research. However, I want to exemplify one of the changes here, particularly because the decision was based not only on practical reasons such as budget or economic support but also for reasons connected to my epistemological and ontological position. I am particularly referring to the fact that my original plan to carry out an ethnographical study was changed to a qualitative study based on interviews. From the beginning, I thought that to account for what happened in teachers' educational practice, their voices should be the primary source of information as has been abundantly suggested by research (e.g. Leatherman, 2009). However, I also thought that as a researcher I had to validate what they said by using an appropriate method. Since I associated ethnography with its tradition in which observation is key in determining an 'objective reality' (Taylor, 2001), I thought that observations involved in ethnography were a form to report 'facts' or 'the truth' of teachers' practice. Later, I learned that this idea of truth by direct observations is invalidated under the principles of socio-constructionism. From this view, as stated

previously, the world is made of interpretations and there is not an objective reality, not even in direct observation. Then, I realised that in order to approach teachers' interpretations of their practice, observation was not vital and, that in-depth interviews could be enough for the purposes of this study.

Stemming from the socio-constructivist perspective, I concluded that even in writing this document, I would not be able to be completely free of bias. I argue that there is no possibility to step outside humanity and view the world with no position at all (Burr 1995 as cited in N. King & Horrocks, 2010). So, I recognise my interpretations of teachers' insights of their practices are not neutral either and on the contrary, they co-construct meaning all along in the research. Considering this, I generated data without purporting to provide a definite truth of what happens in the teachers' practice in my analysis. This discussion shows how methodological and ontological decisions are intricately related to one another. It also highlights how this study has had to deal with research messiness. With these clarifications, I now turn to discuss the role of CDA in this thesis.

## **Critical Discourse Analysis**

So far, I have explained the ontological and epistemological principles of this study, where I have also shown how my position in this regard has been intimately motivated by my own experience and more importantly, my experience regarding issues of race. As I shall show below, in tune with the ontological and epistemological principles discussed above and in consonance with the theoretical underpinnings of this study, CDA offers powerful tools to account for the phenomenon of study.

Discourse analysis embeds some principles that are important to the success of a study like this. Primarily, it acknowledges the importance that language plays in moulding thoughts into words. As Jørgensen and Phillips (2002, p. 9) argue,

with language, we create representations of reality that are never mere reflections of a pre-existing reality but contribute to constructing reality. Meanings and representations are accessible through language use, but they only gain meaning through discourse.

Thus, it can be said that language brings epistemology and ontology together. In the case of this research, it is through language (verbal, visual or spoken) that teachers' educational practices can be accounted for, reported and analysed. Furthermore, language is also a

way to understand all the forces organising society since it is through language that expressions of culture are exposed (Popkewitz, 1984). Therefore, recognising that language plays a fundamental role in understanding any researchable phenomenon, this study has proposed to analyse teachers' interventions using CDA.

Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) affirm that although critical discourse analysts share common ground, their methodological procedures may differ depending on whether they stand on structuralist or poststructuralist perspectives. Their contribution is valuable to understand some nuances of CDA. However, the panorama seems to be much more multifaceted than that. For instance, a contextual historical approach to CDA seems to have been more frequently used in scrutinising the dynamics of political discourse in relation to social practices at macro levels, (Wodak & Meyer, 2009a, 2009b). Other approaches have also been used for the same purpose (Fairclough, 2009) for example. For the analysis of discourses on media, written text and interaction; socio-cognitive as well as socio-psychological approaches seem to have been more relevant (e.g. Van Dijk, 1993; Van Leeuwen, 2009; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). There have also been methodologies of CDA used alongside sociological studies to foreground social issues (e.g. Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Likewise, there have been studies focused on social issues that have taken discourse as a reference to develop an analytical approach to their phenomenon (e.g. Said, 1976). Although, I take tools from Van Dijk (1993) and Wetherell and Potter (1992) who are more interested in the individual discourse, the focus of this study is more aligned with the last view, which consists of analysing a social issue by taking discourse as the reference for its understanding. This is because, following my theoretical underpinnings, the interest in this project is not centred in the individual but in the structures that form discourses which are appropriated by individuals.

Despite the variety of perspectives of CDA, Jørgensen and Phillips (2002, p. 5) identify four principles that all CD analysts follow, which illuminate this study. These are: i) a critical approach to taken for granted knowledge (reality is a product of our categorization of the world); ii) historical and cultural specificity (discourse is a social action that takes part in producing the social world including knowledge, identity and social relations); iii) that there is a link between knowledge and social practices (we construct common truths and compete for what is true or false); and iv) that there is a link between knowledge and social action (depending on social values, some actions are natural and some others are unthinkable). There is a special emphasis in understanding

the way social practices and discourse work together to constitute realities. This study also follows common ground principles, which at the same time resonate with the theoretical tenets in which this study is grounded. I will now explain in more detail the methodological considerations of this study.

## **Methodological considerations**

After having outlined the ontological and epistemological underpinning of this research and having discussed the ways in which this study has approached the notions of CDA, I shall, in the remainder of this chapter, describe methodological considerations. I first refer to the implications of using CRT, whiteness and postcolonialism in methodology in connection with CDA in the context of this project. I will then expand on other procedures and methods for data collection while analysing the impact a study on race has on those. In this context, I finally consider the strategies for data analysis.

### **CDA and CRT, Postcolonialism and whiteness in methodology**

The principles of CDA underlying the methodology of this project worked together with CRT, postcolonialism and whiteness. The use of this theoretical framework implied several aspects that added methodological values to the frame of CDA alone. CRT, Postcolonialism and whiteness have differences, as explained in chapter 3.

Nevertheless, their methodological perspective in this project has in common an interest to challenge structures by rendering uneven power relations visible (Lingard & Latvia; Duncan, 2002; Sleeter). From the view of postcolonialism, those structures are taken as the product of the colonial legacy, while whiteness and CRT specifically analyse them from the view of race. These are aspects this project particularly adds to the use of CDA. In particular, there are other methodological issues that are common to the theoretical framework while they are not for CDA. For example, in order to offer alternative views to dominant discourses, CRT uses counter stories (R. Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Yosso, 2005). Despite counter stories not being central in this thesis, the data collection opened the space for teachers to tell them. In doing so, teachers' accounts provided ideas of the way race, race discrimination and educational practice were part of their experience. Therefore, teachers' stories, though not central, were considered as an insightful element for this research.



I will more specifically refer to how central concepts of CRT, post-colonialism and whiteness studies were used as the basis for data codification and analysis in a subsequent section. For now, having discussed some of the methodological perspectives that locate this study, particularly in the frame of CDA, the following section describes the methodological aspects that operationalised the principles mentioned earlier.

## **Data collection**

As noted above, this is a qualitative study based on interviews. Interviews in qualitative research, more precisely in interpretivist studies, are commonly used as a method to collect data. It is said that talking with people enables them to share their experiences and considerations (N. King & Horrocks, 2010). In this case, as the objective of the study was to elicit teachers' interpretations of their educational practices at different levels and relate that with racial experiences, interviews were designed to fit the purpose. In the environment of a semi-structured interview, teachers were prompted to speak about their racial experiences and the way they saw their practices. Interviews in this study were the instrument used to elicit information on the participants' views. Those interviews later served to analyse relations of the micro and macro world. The questions were flexible by using prompts and probes (N. King & Horrocks, 2010) so more spontaneous information could flow from participants. To provide a clear picture of how the interviews were designed, I now turn to describe the interview guide.

### ***The interview guide***

The interview process started with an interview guide that was prepared bearing in mind the multi-level description of educational practice proposed in this study. Interview questions aimed to capture teachers' views of educational practices (micro level) to relate these with educational policies (macro level) and other actors but more importantly, the media that teachers interact with (meso level). *To this end, the interviews were semi-structured in a multi-level<sup>23</sup> fashion.* The dimensions of educational practice and their levels were the basis for the shape the interview guide took. Each of the three sections in which questions were organised aimed to incorporate

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<sup>23</sup> Multi-level is a term that has been used in several areas of research and social studies to describes concepts that imply a degree of hierarchy (see e.g. Henderson, Yerushalmi, Heller, Heller, & Kuo, 2003; Obrist, Pfeiffer, & Henley, 2010). It is believed to be useful to find complex relationships that would be difficult to relate in simple description. I adopted the term to more accurately describe how the structure of the interview design involved the multidimensionality of the concept of educational practice as documented in this project. In turn, the multi-level design would work conceptually to discriminate the routes of racial identity in educational practices.

elements of racial identity directly and there was a special section in which racial experiences were addressed. Although the questions and prompts were semi-structured in the proposed multi-levels, the questions were flexible, the wording was changed depending on the emphasis needed and unplanned questions could also happen while the interview was developed (Newby, 2010; Robson, 2011). This was also the reason why the interview was referred to as an interview guide rather than as a fixed schedule. According to King and Horrocks (2010), this term highlights the flexibility of the instrument as well as the intention to elicit the subjective experience of the participants (Silverman, 2006) as it benefited the purpose of the study.

The flexibility of the format allowed me to formulate these questions and follow-up probes as I considered necessary to go in-depth and to avoid clichéd answers. Clichéd answers have been described as a common ground in empirical research in the area of race (e.g. Clarke & Garner, 2009; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Since the topic is sensitive, people usually feel intimidated by asking them about it. In my case, the format of the interview tried to reassure teachers to be able to speak more freely.

The internal organisation of the interview within the multi-level nature of educational practice was designed with the expectation to identify possible power relations that have come about in teacher decision-making. In other words, this framework was designed with the intention to be able to capture teachers' view of their educational practices as well as how they might make pedagogical decisions in relation to those power relations.

### **Some problematics of researching 'race'**

Race is an area that is tricky to research due to the way it coexists between oppositional discourses of denial and social practices that reaffirm it daily with and without consciousness. This tense coexistence of discourses and practices was reflected along the development of this study, especially during the design and collection of data. For example, for a moment developing a narrative-based interview appeared to be more appropriate to be able to understand teachers' perceptions and experiences of race. However, in the process of designing these interviews several questions appeared which prevented me from seeing clearly how narrations could come from teachers' answers. This was evident mainly in the piloting of the protocol in which I realised stories about race were not easily elicited from teachers. Then, following King and Horrock's (2010) guidelines, I made some wording adjustments with the aim of improving the quality of the interview. However, the actual application of the interviews made evident that

teachers were not going to tell me 'racial' stories anyway for various reasons. Firstly, teachers were not familiar with the idea of race in Colombia and, as explained in the literature review, it has been hidden under the ideology of mestizo. Consequently, as tends to happen in researching race, participants aware of the negative value involved in the concept of race did not feel comfortable talking about it. Perhaps they also did not want to be judged as 'racist'. This fact added an element of diffidence from them to answer the questions in form of narratives.

By analysing the way stories usually come up in other research studies of race (e.g. Clarke & Garner, 2009; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001), it seems that racial stories are more likely to appear not only if appropriate questions are asked, but also if participants feel a need to voice their experiences. From this view, I guessed that affected groups might have probably been more open to talk about experiences and feelings of oppression in which they felt they had been involved. That did not appear to be the case of my participants who self-classified as mestizos (the largest 'racial' group in Colombia). They did not show in their answers that race is a problem that has affected their lives. They were not aware of racial oppression and, consequently, they did not feel that need to speak. At the point this was happening, I already drew the conclusion that my concern with the interview turned into an indicator of what was happening with teachers' privilege regarding their experiences of race. As a result, I decided to change the initial idea of an interview based only on narrative questions to an in-depth interview that may elicit narratives (stories) in some of its questions. In that way, I could allow stories to come up at any point in their answers, more spontaneously.

### ***In-depth interviews***

In-depth interview is a qualitative research method that usually takes the form of an informal conversation with a purpose (Yeo et al., 2013). The purpose as well as the position of the researcher is what makes it different to a normal conversation (Yeo et al., 2013, p. 139). In the context of this sort of interview, each teacher participant provided information about their interpretations of their educational practices, perceptions of race and racial experiences. While this approach appeared to be the most suitable in my analysis, it is at the same time problematic because the researcher's position seems to be neutral. Therefore, it is necessary to accept that, as racial structures are part of any interaction, power relations also play a role in an interview (Pillow, 2003). This factor is an important consideration to understand how the interviews were carried out and the

kind of knowledge it generated. I will discuss this thoroughly in the following section; for now, I will continue giving details of the interview guide.

The kind of interview developed in this study was designed with two different sorts of questions, one with questions related to constructions of identity and educational practices that were addressed to elicit opinions. For instance, ‘People say in Colombia there is no racism, what do you think about it?’ (see appendix N.1). The second was related to the prompts or questions that featured story development (Atkinson, 1998; Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000; N. King & Horrocks, 2010; Yeo et al., 2013). Those questions have been defined as narrative questions and were related to the stories referred in the previous section. In this case, they tried to capture specific scenes that related the two topics: race and educational practices. For instance, I used questions such as: ‘Have you ever been a witness to a racist experience at school or somewhere else, can you tell me what you remember?’

The narrative elicitation technique seemed to have suited the purpose of this project to understand the participants’ description of experiences of race and its relationship with their educational practices. According to Atkinson (1998), the high degree of reflexivity of this type of questions is what makes them valuable. In this process of reflection, the elicitation of teachers’ feelings is motivated. This was a significant factor to consider in the analysis (Crotty, 1998; Martinez Rizo, 2002; Scotland, 2012). This narrative format appeared to have provided rich, fine-grained data taken from teachers’ personal and professional backgrounds. Stories came up sometimes as a result of planned questions, but some other times at unexpected moments. In my attempt to get the ‘most authentic data’ when participants started to tell stories my participation in the conversation diminished, so the participants had the floor to express their thoughts.

This narrative procedure helped me to produce data without eliciting it directly. Through this process I thought this could be useful to avoid situations where the interviewees could have felt threatened. I also gathered complementary information in which teachers were requested to exemplify their lessons or to recount classroom episodes. In my interview guide I was expecting teachers to provide information specifically about the goals they propose for their lessons, the lesson content, critical events, etc. I thought these ideas came more naturally with this narrative procedure. However, as mentioned previously, all of this involved my position as a researcher trying to develop trustworthy research which was also challenged by the socio-constructionist view of race-based methodologies (Pillow, 2003). In other words, from

the view of these methodologies, as a researcher I had to consider that I am also immersed in race structures and I also represent power relations that may have affected the data collection, the knowledge generated as well as the analysis.

### ***Knowledge***

To provide a view on the way subjectivity is formed, my study approaches teachers' subjective knowledge. Following Wetherell and Potter (1992), I consider that in approaching teachers' views, it is possible to have a closer look at what happens in practice and how those practices shape world visions and culture. However, as pointed before I am also aware of the power relations that play a role in interaction and therefore, it would be naive to think that my research attempts to provide generalisation of any sort. In fact, the data showed that teachers' positions were not stable and that along their conversations those positions were shifting with regards to their own answers (see later discussion in the data chapter 5 and 6). I must also say that my fleeting relationship with these teachers does not allow me to generalise. This is why I can only say that they provided a snapshot of their beliefs and ideas. Despite that two of them were my ex-students, I had not been in contact with them for a long time and the other teachers were people I just met for the interview. This is problematic because a more in-depth analysis would require at least more time shared with them. **However, more time would not be a guarantee of objectivity either because, in the end, the researcher's interpretation is always subjective (Brooks, Te Riele, & Maguire, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).** In this context, the interviews were not attempts to capture teachers' true voices either. Despite the fact that this was my intention in the beginning, I must recognise now that the researcher is never certain about the truthfulness of the participants' ideas.

I would illustrate one of these points by recalling one of the participants' words: Piedad, one of my ex-students. I noticed that during the interview she was kindly trying to provide the answers that I was looking for. Probably based on the power relations on our previous relationship as a teacher-student, she was playing back the role of compliant student trying to get the correct answer. She realised I got more interested and started to expand her exemplification with emphasis on the topic of racial identity and racism. This can be seen in the following example:

***Piedad:** ... In here you require studies and there are very few opportunities for the people who have a low income. Well, if you study, you progress and people*

*stop seeing you as one in a bunch (uno del monton). But I also said to [my brother], and to you who are white with light coloured eyes, you have more chances than I do.*

***Researcher: why do you think that?***

***Piedad: ah... in this country, the people who are brown, I mean, the black ones. People feel that they are nuisance. And the brownish, (triguenito) as well. On the other hand, the white one, with light coloured of eyes, the stereotypical Gringo. To this one, we can give the chance. That is what I have seen.***

***Researcher: how have you seen that?***

***Piedad: Because it is true. For example, in the school where I work. There was a black teacher some time ago. And nobody liked him. Even some of the children said, hmm that black guy might be smelly. Should he be a teacher? You see? Only because of race, people believed he was ignorant or dirty. I don't know.***

***Researcher: and did the teacher have anything of that?***

***Piedad: no, not at all (laughs) ... the man was almost a doctor in education. ... nobody even bothered asking his name...***

As seen in her words, she may have probably realised I changed my body language after she started to mention aspects of race in her conversation, so that encouraged her to speak more and even tell a story about it. Although the example seemed to be quite insightful for my analysis, after reflecting on the general data, I felt the teachers' narration was hyperbolic. The fact that children were using such words as 'smelly' to me seemed to be a bit of an exaggeration. One of the reasons why I evaluated these data as such was related to the fact that I did not find such an extreme expression in the other teachers' answers. However, there could be other cases in which this may have happened. She provided many examples in comparison to the other participants. Stating this situation makes explicit how power relations and race structures play a role not only in the contents of the data but also in the process of data collection. Perhaps my whiteness represented in my position as 'professional', 'researcher' and 'previous teacher' could cause participants to make up or at least embellish their answers. Although there is not much we can do to avoid this, it is valuable to recognise this as part of understanding how the researcher is also involved in a racially structured context, particularly, when this project is centred on racial identity.

There were other cases in which data might have been affected by race structures. For instance, Wilmar, the school coordinator said he was almost sweating throughout the interview. One cannot deny that the interaction with Wilmar could be seen as a risk for him since he was representing an ‘authority’ and he could have been ‘playing white’<sup>24</sup> in his desire to appear to have the right voice. These elements are mediators of interaction that also added meaning to the interpretations I would later have to consider in my analysis. Additionally, the sensitivity of the topic did bring other cases of tension which were noticed in changes in the speech markers or non-verbal language. Those moments were undoubtedly meaningful. The attitudes that teachers displayed in the interviews are linked to the idea of race as a social construction since not only is race constituted in structures that mark boundaries, but it is also through interaction that race is made and unmade (Knowles & Alexander, 2005). Power relations work for subjects to take positions and those power relations finally affect the data collection and interpretation (Pillow, 2003). Those clarifications are significant to take account the variant nature of subjective knowledge.

### ***Participants***

As table 4.1 shows, this project worked with sixteen (16) participants, ten (10) men and six (6) women. Fifteen (15) are secondary school teachers and one (1) is the coordinator of one of the schools involved. The teachers are representative of different subjects and age range is diverse. As is the case of most people in Bogota, this group of teachers can be considered middle class. All of them were born in Bogota. Nonetheless, in most of the cases in this sample, their parents are from various towns of Colombia and have migrated to Bogota in search of a better life.

This study concentrated on this specific group of teachers for three main reasons. First, because state school teachers share similar job conditions (salary, regulations and socio-economic background of both themselves and students). Second, because these teachers’ practices are more likely to be influenced by national education policy than in private schools. As I have already mentioned, it is not mandatory for private schools to assume the national curriculum as a referent. Third, because they all work in the secondary level of education (grades 6-11).

Those teachers teach different subjects (4 English, 1 philosophy, 1 physics, 2 Spanish, 2 social science, 1 technology, 1 entrepreneurship, 2 maths and 1 biology). The diversity

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<sup>24</sup> Playing white is a term I have adapted from Derrington (2007) to explain strategies that this participant used to cope with aspects of white privilege and supremacy.

of the areas of knowledge is relevant in this study to take account of the different viewpoints from where racial identity might be related to teachers' educational practices. This decision was made based on that as confirmed in the data analysis, social matters tend to be assumed as the responsibility of social science teachers (see chapter 5).

	Pseudonym	Age	Years of experience in public ed.	Origen	Subject
1	Antony	32	7	Bogota	English
2	Tomasc	45	21	Bogota	English
3	James	34	8	La Cruz Nariño	Philosophy
4	Marioc	50	28	Bogota	Physics
5	Raul	41	4	Bogota	Spanish
6	Wilmar	52	26	Bogota	Academic Coordinator
7	Martin	37	10	Bogota	Maths
8	Omar	45	15	Caldas	English
9	Luisc	30	2	Bogota	Social science
10	Hector	38	14	Bogota	Humanities, Spanish
11	Molly	50	22	Tolima	Entrepreneurship
12	Hilda	32	8	Guaduas	Technology. Systems Engine.
13	Janeth	40	17	Bogota	Humanities, Spanish
14	Irene	36	6	Bogota	Social science
15	Gina	47	20	Bogota	Biology
16	Piedad	30	4	Bogota	English

**Table 4.1:** *Participants*



## ***Recruitment***

The recruitment of teachers in this study was undertaken using different strategies. First, I contacted (via e-mail) current professional teachers, who used to be part of a teaching training programme at a university where I used to work. Another strategy was to formally invite colleagues of those same professionals I first contacted. An additional strategy was to invite teachers who were referred to me either by other teachers, family or friends. After having established contact with each teacher individually, I explained the project in general terms and formally invited them to take part in my research by means of a participant information sheet and a consent form (see appendices 2 and 3). These recruitment strategies were useful for several reasons. Firstly, contacting teachers by email was practical considering that I was abroad while planning the whole process. Secondly, the fact that I was known to the teachers who referred the participants to me, helped them show willingness to participate and be open to have a friendly ‘conversation’. Lastly, these strategies allowed me to carry out the interviews without the need of gatekeepers’ permissions, which at the same time contributed to generating a relaxed environment to speak. After acceptance of their participation through formal signature of the documents, we arranged an appointment and I visited them in the schools where we had the interviews. Despite all these advantages, it is worth restating that these did not guarantee that answers were revealing ‘the truth’. As mentioned before, my intervention as a researcher may have generated in these teachers a certain tension that would be also reflected in the kinds of answers provided in relation to the main topic of this research.

While I initially had no intention to target a specific ‘racial’ group to balance ethical dilemmas (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007), most of the teachers identified themselves in the mestizo or pluri-cultural categories. As a Colombian citizen who is part of the perceived mestizo community, my shared background with the participants appeared to me working as an ethnographic tool to understand some of their thoughts. My background also enabled a wider understanding of teachers’ interpretations and worked as an extension of knowledge of the participants which, in the view of Wetherell & Potter (1992) is useful to further illuminate analysis of discourse. Bias appears to be restricted in this position if the researcher steps back and holds a critical view on taken for granted ideas (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). I followed these indications religiously by giving space to participants to express their ideas as they told them. At the same time, my life experiences and my knowledge of the context helped

me to disentangle some of the ideas that were unclear in discourse sometimes. Similarly, in the analysis I tried to question my own understandings from the lens of theory in an attempt to see other explanations about what I was seeing and understanding. I shall state some of the flaws of this process in the following section.

### ***Ethical issues***

Being aware that ethical issues in educational research deal with different layers (external, consequential, deontological and individual) (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007), and that ethics is involved along the process of research (Brooks et al., 2014), this section makes specific emphasis on the involvement of participants. This special emphasis is done because participants played the most important role in data collection and no gatekeepers were needed to access the contexts where the participants belonged to. It is important to clarify that this focus is also foregrounded in this section but other aspects and ethical dilemmas entailed in the researchers' position and the concerns of methodological design have been discussed in other particular sections of this chapter (e.g. knowledge or data collection).

Hence, participants were fully informed of the research purposes, procedures and of the expectations from the research before they decided to take part in the study by means of a written informed consent. These documents were collected along a participant information sheet which clearly explained the nature of this investigation, ensured that their identities would remain confidential and that the information they provided would be used for research purposes only (see appendix N.2 and 3). Thus, as part of this process, pseudonyms were used to refer to them in this study and in any subsequent publications. The names for those pseudonyms were used randomly without concrete reference or relation to participants. The informed consent made clear that, as participants, teachers had the chance to withdraw from the study at any point before and during data collection. Participants were also given the chance to ask any sort of question about the study, before, during and after data collection. In the same vein, if they were interested, they were told that they could receive a full report of the study after it was finished and before it was published. Participants were informed of the topic of racial identity in the research from the beginning, and due to the controversy that the topic generates, adjustments were made along the development of the data collection. These adjustments were made basically to improve the data collection as well as to avoid distress to participants.

The previous procedures were developed by following the guidelines for good research provided by the British Educational Research Association (BERA 2011) and American Educational Research Association (AERA, (2011) as established by the University of East London. However, it is necessary to acknowledge that these guidelines can also be considered as whiteness dominant because they are stated by white dominant countries where the understanding of socio-cultural and economic factors may differ from other contexts (Brooks, Te Riele, & Maguire, 2014). Consequently, the guidelines offered by these organisations act as racial structures that shape the ethical considerations of this study. In this scenario, and considering that this is an interpretivist study, it is then necessary to identify some tensions emerging in this methodological process. This is an issue of high relevance according to Brooks et al. (2014) and Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) which now needs some attention.

Even if there was a clear intention to capture the participants' voice, I am aware that there is not possibility to fully account for individuals' experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). From the socio-constructionist view, an individual's voice is firstly not represented as a clear 'truth', what is presented as data samples is the result of my interpretation, edition and focus. Therefore, my voice as a researcher is actually the one voicing participants and interpreting their thoughts through the lens of the theory. Secondly, the social construction of reality also means that an individual's voice is never individual, it is indeed an amalgamation of inter-subjectivities (Weedon, 2004; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). In this context, the complexity of discourse is what really forms what is seen as part of the participants' accounts. Although bringing to the fore these aspects does not attempt to claim validity to the study, it is a way to state the debate on how research ethics plays an ambiguous role in research development. I have to argue that, as a researcher, I represent participants through theory in a way that they will probably not see themselves reflected and this is problematic. In this perspective, I must recognise that I am complicit in a process some have criticised as serving the interests of the researcher rather than simply representing the participants' voice (Koro-Ljungberg & Mazzei, 2012; Pillow, 2003). As will be shown later in the data chapters, for example, drawing on the theory underpinning this study, some **negative findings are shown in terms teachers' reproduction of discriminatory practices**. However, as also shown in Biesta, Presley and Robinson's (2015), I also must acknowledge that teachers do not necessarily see it from the same perspective informing this study. Therefore, as

teachers' reproduction of discriminatory practices appear to develop unconsciously, this should not undervalue the efforts teachers make to enhance good teaching.

It is also important to acknowledge from the ethics viewpoint that my research is a product of my interpretation of reality. In this sense, my personal biography, my profession, my gender and ethnicity shape my thoughts. As Chadderton (2013, p. 373) points out "analysing, interpreting and representing the data is inevitably a subjective process and the way discussions and participants are represented, depends to a large extent on the researchers' interpretation" (p. 373). From my professional values, I feel that teachers have a responsibility to develop a critical sense on students to be able to overcome situations that add distress to their experiences, like the one I discussed in relation to the marginalisation that I experienced myself in my story (chapter 1). This is where the inspiration came from for this project. The ideas here are my interpretation from the experiences I live, the position I have in society and the context to which I belong to. I am making clear with this that my interpretations contribute to giving meaning to participants' thoughts. My own ethical position in this research relies on the principles of responsible research and commitment to critical pedagogy and social justice (Freire, 2000).

Within the frame of ethics, this project also attempts to offer an alternative to the traditional view of qualitative research that centred attention on the exotic and different (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009). I do this by centring attention on the perceived mestizo as unnamed category that is enmeshed in racial constructions that also need understanding and questioning. This questioning is even more necessary when I, as a researcher, am ascribed as part of that community. This is a political stance which I also consider is a responsibility of the researchers (Pillow, 2003). In other words, "to rethink how we know, what we know [is to provide] a new ethics for approaching research" (Pillow, 2003 p 188).

As an additional compromise, this research does not focus on understanding mestizos' life experiences as such, but it specifically addresses the way they construct their perceptions of 'racial' groups. Instead of researching 'the unknown' and essentialise it in difference, this research tries to problematise the ideas that are consensually recognised as 'the truth' about those groups and the power relations that take part on their construction as well as their influence in educational practice. Consequently, ethics in this project come from a position that does not accept difference is essential. On the contrary, it is argued that perceptions of others are essentialised as different.

From such a perspective, the idea of categorisation of racial identities is not shared as these categories form part of language production and consequently contribute to their constituency (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Weedon, 2004). However, to understand language constructions, we may also feel trapped by language (Koro-Ljungberg & Mazzei, 2012) because language is also a social convention. Then, racial categories are used for understanding the perceptions that teachers construct through their personal experiences and interpretations.

### **Data analysis**

This section discusses more in detail the operationalisation of data analysis. The first stage of data analysis started from the very beginning with the design of the interviews that were based on multi-level educational practice. That is, as explained before, questions were used to explore each of these levels and find specific instances of power relations embedded in each. Discourse analysis then allowed me to reach an in-depth examination of how discourses on racial identity seem to be constructed and how teachers relate them in the interview data. As also scrutinised before, CDA does not offer a fixed frame of analysis. Furthermore, discourse analysts offer a variety of toolkits that can be used for a variety of purposes. In the case of this study, the analysis of discourse was done by also following some of the analytical proposals developed by Wetherell and Potter (1992) and from Van Dijk (1993). These proposals complement each other in framing the identification of meaningful data along with the theoretical tenets of CRT, postcolonialism and whiteness. On the one hand, Wetherell & Potter propose the use of ‘interpretive repertoires’ which is a powerful tool to analyse spoken discourse, especially interviews. They define these repertoires as building blocks by which we construct our accounts and which are manifestations of individuals’ subjectification in relation to a specific socio-historical context. In this vein, ‘interpretive repertoires’ can be forms of discourse (phrases, sentences, words, sounds, movements, etc. and whole ideas) or strategies (avoidance, eye contact, or silences) which used unconsciously embed meaning in the interview and potentially can be used by the researcher to understand the problem of analysis.

On the other hand, Van Dijk (1993) with a major interest in linguistic approximation to language use and supported by his own research, provides clues on linguistic resources (e.g. omission of agents in clauses, avoidance of justifications, disclaimers) that are useful to identify the shape that language can take while embedding ideas of racism

which may not be clearly seen. These resources identified not only evident acts of racism using language but also to identify transformations of language use aimed to avoid racist connotations which imply racist practices. Although Van Dijk's (1993) tools were used with few examples, both proposals show compatibility with this study from the most obvious reason: they both focus analysis on the topic of race and racism in discourse. Additionally, complementarity has to do with how one focuses on the analysis of the individual in relation to his socio-historical context (Wetherell & Potter, 1992) while the other analyses the social cognition (imaginaries and representations) in relation to macro and micro levels of discourse (Van Dijk, 1993). I used these tools in combination with their theoretical underpinnings working as a methodology, the way I used those in my own study is presented as follows.

In my analysis, I also took into consideration two additional points that Wetherell and Potter (1992) make. First, that although discourse analysis is a valuable method to pinpoint patterns of language use in relation to social practices, not all the analytic tools provided by discourse analysis are useful to analyse any sort of topic. In the case of racism, for example, a socio-critical approach makes discourse analysis more tenable than psychological perspectives. This is because psychological approaches to language do not interrogate the ideologies in which language is embedded as seems to be the direction of studies on race. Second, critical discourse analysis is characterised by a flexibility that allows the procedure of analysis to be approached deductively and/or inductively. However, the application of those analytical tools cannot be made without a previous careful reflection that permits such a modification. In relation to the first point, these are the reasons why I decided to draw mainly on the aforementioned analytical tools that reflect a more sociological perspective of race/racism. In relation to the second point, after a revision of multiple tools offered by different CD analysts, I came up with a plan that allowed me to identify interpretive repertoires connected to the main topics of the theoretical tenets informing the study. Such a plan included a series of procedures that I describe in the following section.

### ***Analysis procedure***

The detailed analysis was done following several procedures namely a codification and identification of interpretive repertoires in relation to the main tenets of the theoretical framework. From the theories, concepts such as: epistemic violence, dysconsciousness,

whiteness as well as the principles of CRT (see more detail in previous chapter) were used to codify the data. Those notions were basically used in the first revisions of data which later were organised in grouping themes (see appendix N. 4). Those categories were chosen because they seem to have appeared in the data while notes were taken in the margins during the process of transcription. Some of them were not used because they did not come up or they appeared very few times. An example of this was ‘interest convergence’, a principle of CRT which appeared only two or three times.

Subsequently, this process involved the grouping and re-grouping of themes taking in mind frequencies and relevance, and an establishment of salient thematic areas that pointed to answer the research questions (see appendix N. 5). After a careful reading and re-reading of the data, the second procedure involved a ‘categorisation’ (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Categorisation was used here as a strategy to group ideas which were used by participants to describe into specifically defined groups. I combined this with a thematic analysis which identified relevant topics to the research questions and those themes were organised following topic hierarchies (see appendix N. 6). The categorisation sought to find clues indicating connection with the principles of the theories underlying this study. After this, the repertoires were broken down into two broad topics: racial identity and educational practices. After the grouping, a new analysis was made and a new subdivision emerged. Racial identity was divided into local dimensions, global dimension and social impact. Educational practices were split into power relations with macro levels of educational practice, power relations with meso levels of educational practice and educational practices per se. After contrast among those different categories, those groups were the result of a re-categorisation that showed to be stronger in relation to what was found as well as how it related the literature (See Appendix N. 7). In a final stage I analysed more particular forms of language to find shapes of discourse within the categories already identified that could support my findings (see actual analysis next chapter). I based my analysis on that data, so information that seemed not to match this framework was not considered.

### ***What is lost in translation?***

Before finishing the explanation of data analysis, it is necessary to say that interviews were collected in Spanish (the mother tongue of the participants) and were translated into English. Even though some of the teachers were teachers of English, interviewing them in Spanish helped not to limit their expression of ideas. With regards to this point

it is essential to clarify some of the implications of translating data. Temple (1997) develops a discussion in which she specifies how researchers should consider aspects of translation seriously. In a detailed analysis on the process of translation of her own research data, she realised that translators generally take a lot of meaning of the original text being translated. Reflecting on how interviews are in fact biographies of informants, she remarks that a person not part of that biography brings a lot of meaning and adds new interpretations. Echoing Porter (1995 in Temple, 1997), Temple describes the transformation of information as second hand-ethnography. In my case, I eschewed these problems by doing all the process myself. I transcribed all the interviews directly into English and took advantage of my shared background with participants as well as my knowledge of both languages to try to approximate a more accurate translation.

Since my methodology was based on discourse analysis, full transcription was of relevance (Edwards, 2014). However, short segments were not translated due to their lack of connection with the topic of the research. To identify those segments, markers in which each thematic section started and finished were recorded. A transcription code was also used to make explicit paralinguistic information, non-verbal language and my additions (see appendix N.8). Nevertheless, colloquial expressions were translated by trying to find a similar colloquial expression in English or through consultation with a native English speaker to gain improved accuracy. Despite the systematic process of transcription described here, it is necessary to acknowledge that information might be lost in translation and I would certainly agree with Edwards (2014) when she says that translation goes beyond words. Some of the cases in which this loss may have occurred would probably be with regards to referents that are culturally related or cases/situations that maybe a common place for a language context but not for the other. Linguistically, there is a specific impersonal word used in Spanish that is commonly used by participants to refer to a generalisation. This linguistic resource uses 'one' where 'I' (the person speaking) may or not be included (e.g. *uno no sabe*/ one doesn't know). That impersonal word is 'one' in English, however, it can be more commonly translated as 'you' - e.g. 'you have to work hard to be able to get a reward'. This was a recurrent resource used by teachers. In an attempt to provide a clear translation sometimes it was necessary to translate it following its use in Spanish ('one') and other times as more commonly used in English ('you'). In any case, there are probably other cases of loss which could be beyond the reaches of translation.



## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have outlined how I addressed the philosophical underpinnings of my research as well as how these have guided the research, the data collection and data analysis. I have specially considered that under a socio-constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology, it is crucial to report the messiness that is natural in qualitative research like this, so there is clear distance from an oppositional objectivist scientific study as well as acknowledgement of subjectivity. This position has also been the basis from which I have explained some implications in both the development and the reporting of data. In addition to this, I have shown that CDA, whose principles and methodology are articulated with critical theories used in the theoretical framework, is a suitable approach that provides tools to analyse discourse in different dimensions. In the specific case of this study, CDA draws on discursive forms and strategies that are useful to understand perceptions of racial identity and educational practice in teachers' discourses. This methodological framework has been supported by the CDA proposals of Wetherell and Potter (1992) and some of Van Dijk (several works 1992; 1993) in conjunction with the underpinnings of CRT, postcolonialism and whiteness. With the main interest in racial identity, I built on those proposals by attempting to find other ways in which CDA can shed light on the issue of racial formation and racial identification in the analysis of discourse and related aspects.

In the following chapter, I report on teachers' perceptions of racial identity and how those perceptions are related to power relations involved in macro- and meso levels of educational practice. This analysis is also reflected in relation to how they have an impact on educational practices. Later in chapter 6, I explore in more detail how the perceptions teachers have about racial identities appear in teachers' categorisations and descriptions of 'racial' groups. I explore how those perceptions seem to have a relation to teachers' educational practices and how new configurations of identity appear in their discourses.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **THE IMPACT OF WHITENESS IN TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF RACIAL IDENTITIES AND EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES**

#### **Introduction**

In chapter 2 I argued that national policies in Colombia, including those in education, have reinforced the configuration of racial identity(ies) in asymmetrical relationships and that this process has been constituted historically and structurally. I also discussed the fact that, despite the recent policies of pluri-cultural recognition, this process seems to persist to current practices although in subtle unperceived ways. In this chapter I explore, through the perceptions of teachers in my study, how educational practices seen from the macro (policies and curriculum) and meso (media in this case) levels seem to shape perceptions of racial identity(ies). I argue that for teachers, those levels of educational practice embed multiple power relations which lead them to shape their pedagogical decision making. The analysis of these relations allows me to draw conclusions on the ways these relations of power may contribute to the teachers' construction of perceptions and attitudes of racial identities in educational practices.

Informed by theoretical concepts such as dysconsciousness (J. King, 1991), white supremacy, whiteness (Gillborn, 2006, 2010) and epistemic violence (Castro-Gomez, 2000), this chapter scrutinises teachers' perceptions of policies and media in relation to educational practices. The use of these theoretical concepts is helpful to unearth issues of race of which teachers seemed not to be exactly aware and which seem to shape their educational practices. For example, drawing on the notion of dysconsciousness, it is possible to identify factors that may have led teachers to perceive social reality from simplistic perspectives. As Gillborn (2010) discusses, white supremacy and whiteness are also useful concepts to understand how policies are framed in structures that favour (white) elites. In order to develop this discussion, the first part of this chapter explores teachers' perceptions of national identity. The analysis starts by arguing that teacher's discourses seem to be aligned with those of policies. It follows that teachers' conceptualisations suggest that pluri-culturality in public policy has obscured rather than addressed the problem of racism. In exploring these issues, I also argue that the

way policies work, as reported by teachers, seem to contribute to racial inequality. The second part focuses on how teachers perceive educational policies. The discussions I present serve to suggest conclusions about how these policies may contribute to identity formation in asymmetric relationships. More specifically, I explain that as part of white supremacy, policies seem to influence teachers' educational practices and professionalism. The third part deals with how teachers' unawareness of racial structures in media appears to also support white supremacy at a symbolic level in their perceptions. The fourth and last part of the chapter examines how policies of ethno-education seem to shape teachers' perceptions of educational practices and how those perceptions also involve attitudes towards racial issues. All these discussions open the analysis developed in the next chapter where teachers' perceptions of racial identity are explored.

### **Whiteness reinforcing asymmetric relations on teachers' perceptions of racial identity**

This section presents the debate on how perceptions of racial identity appear to be formed by teachers, not only because of their general exposure to wider discourse, but also because those discourses appear to be constructed based on power relations. These power relations seem to shape teachers' practice too because, as Said (1976) explains, they are reflected in both social institutions and mechanisms that limit people's agency. In order to develop this discussion, the section first introduces an analysis of how teachers' self-racial identifications appear to adapt discourses such as those in policy while overlooking power relations that reproduce inequality. [Following that, it includes a detailed debate of how policies may contribute to maintaining 'white supremacy' \(racial structures\) and, thus, racial inequality \(Jabbar & Mirza, 2017\).](#) In particular, the notion of dysconsciousness (J. King, 1991) is taken up to inform this analysis.

Teachers in the interviews were asked to self-identify racially and explain the way they understood racial identity in Colombia. This process unsurprisingly generated some level of uneasiness. This feeling appears to be related to the association that is made between race and racism which, as already noted, is common in race studies (Clarke & Garner, 2009). Although most teachers referred to the category of mestizo (mixed) to describe their racial identity, some seemed to feel more comfortable using the word multi-cultural or pluri-cultural. In this context, within the general perception of 'racial'

groups, teachers tended to prefer the ideas of ethnicity, apparently because they see race as a racist reference whilst ethnicity is considered more accurate or accepted; and therefore, more convenient. The following is an example of how this took place with teachers in the interviews. The prompts in this case, may sound somewhat leading. However, they were used to foreground why teachers did not feel comfortable at the moment of being asked about their racial identity.

***Researcher: do you believe in race?***

***Irene: I think that is a concept that has been traditionally used in our formation. But I think the concept excludes. If we are all humans, why are we distinguished? We are distinguished by cultural features [and] even, identities are distinct. We all have different ways of thinking. All human beings are totally different worlds. Therefore, I think education has made the mistake of educating us from the view of race as something that excludes.***

As seen in this excerpt, this participant suggests that one of the main reasons not to use race as a category was the fact that the concept implied exclusion and discrimination. The avoidance of conflict involved in the idea of race has been criticised by CRTs such as Leonardo (2002) as a superficial approach to address social experiences which sustain social injustice. This is, in the words of (Walton et al., 2018), race elision, a phenomenon that permits subsequent dysconsciousness. However, more common than avoiding the topic of race when identifying themselves, teachers in this study classify themselves as multicultural. These self-identifications appear to be productions of similar discourses to the ones in the national policies, and the description of a multicultural national identity in the constitution in 1991. With regards to this, Said (1976) says that ways of life and thought are not immersed in the habitus of social actors. He also says that they are also anchored in objective structures: State laws, commercial codes, curricula in schools, research projects, bureaucratic rules or institutional forms of consumption (as cited by Castro-Gómez, 2005b, p. 22). In this case, it appears that the promulgation of the law as multi-ethnic and pluri-cultural has resulted in people understanding ethnicity in relation to race as more convenient. So, as is suggested by Irene, teachers do not feel comfortable using the word race for its discriminatory connotation. Instead ethnicity, as emphasised in the policy, is open and is thought to endorse equality and recognition. As stated in the constitution, however, the words of Gullestad are meaningful for the analysis of these perceptions.

Anthropologists have primarily referred to ethnicity rather than to 'race'. But [...] focusing on ethnicity frequently implies that 'race' unobtrusively slips in through the backdoor. And, I want to add, it usually implies that social class and gender slip out through another backdoor (as cited in Eide, 2010, p. 4)

The citation helps us to uncover myths around 'race' (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2004). For whiteness as well as for CRT scholars, people's avoidance of speaking about race indicates the existence of racial structures (Hooks, 1992). Additionally, theories of whiteness have stated that silencing race as well as the racialisation of some groups under the umbrella of ethnicity is a form of white privilege (McIntosh, 2004). In agreement with Gullestad, CR theorists state that even though the discourses of race have changed, the stigmas, stereotypes and more importantly, racial inequality persist in practice (R. Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

The example above opens the discussion of how wider discourses seem to shape teachers' discourse under the frequently unquestioned illusion that they are neutral and value-free. The following is an example of how this is suggested in relation to policies. When asking Omar about the source of his knowledge regarding indigenous communities, he said the following:

*Omar: Well, it is seen. After the constitution of 1991. There have been some stages ... to avoid separation of groups that have different...different beliefs, if we can say that. Or different cultural features. From year 1991, we started to move forward to have a unified Colombia.*

As this excerpt shows, in shaping ideas of race, the teacher seems to rely on policies (the national constitution in this case) to construct his own understandings. In this case, Omar takes it to back up his beliefs of Colombian integration. The next section takes up this discussion to particularly examine how policies that are supposed to combat racial inequality blur it instead.

### **Dysconsciousness on policy contributing to racial inequality**

This section argues that teachers' perceptions indicate that policies of national identity based on multi-culturality in Colombia seem to have disguised rather than confronted the problem of racism. In the ambivalent discourse that combines national union and cultural differentiation towards ethnic minorities, teachers appear to only partially understand the social situation of inequality of the country. As seen in chapter 2 and as

I have argued in this study, policies have played an important role in the historical development of racial identity in Colombia. In fact, this role appears to be framed within what J. King (1991) defines as ‘dysconsciousness.’ This is a concept related not only to the tendency to disregard reality as subjective and believe that it is objective but also to an uncritical (mental and physical) habit to accept things as given, therefore justifying inequality (J. King, 1991). It was briefly explained above that teachers seem less conflicted with labelling groups in a multi-cultural, pluri-cultural or mestizo identity rather than accepting a classification based on racial features. However, their answers also show a multiplicity of perspectives on what these categories mean. Their understandings were multifarious and often contradictory. Whatever the categories and their views on these categories, there are two important characteristics that need to be highlighted. First, that both, pluri-culturality or mestizo are still strongly influenced by whiteness-centred discourses that have been part of the inheritance of the political ideology of independence (see chapter 2). Second, both the conception of mestizo as well as that of pluri-cultural, also bring new forms of dysconsciousness. The first aspect will be extended in the discussion in the section of ‘whiteness in mestizo identities’ in the next chapter. The debate on dysconsciousness is the main concern of this section.

The following excerpts are indicative of the diversity of views of identity that teachers used for themselves based on the concept of multi-culturality:

***Researcher: ... if I ask you, about your own identity? What would you say?***

***Molly: I identify myself as a mixture. A bit of everything”. Because of my way of being, because of my mood, because of everything, I think that I am blacker.***

***Researcher: how do you define your racial identity?***

***Janeth: I think that I have strong roots from the coast. Because my father is from the coast and I like the Atlantic coast very much. However, I love Bogota too. But I lived there, but when I was very little. And I generally go to visit. But I love it. I love their culture, their music. In fact, I speak very loudly and my father speaks very loudly too.***

Apart from the notion of multiculturalism being multiply interpreted, the excerpts also show that there is an emphasis on cultural approaches rather than on critical socio-economic and historical racial reflections of identity configurations. Even though teachers were not asked directly about their understanding of multiculturalism, they

tended largely to use this as a 'racial' identification and refer to cultural superficial features that were more descriptive about cultural practices and traditions (Brislin, 1993) such as the ones illustrated in the excerpts. [Multiculturalism in this sense assumes that everybody belongs to a defined 'culture' while whiteness is accepted as the norm \(Walton et al., 2018\). For instance, those identifications implied little or no reference to the indigenous or Afro-Colombian heritage in their descriptions.](#) On the other hand, important aspects involved in ethnisation such as the restructuring of the social, economic and political organisation of recognised ethnicities with respect to the mestizo community (Vasquez, 2006), seems to be ignored as a consequence of what the policies of pluri-culturality have implied.

Omi and Winant (1993) assert that the uncritical cultural emphasis in the debate of identity is a dishonest intention to hide racial thinking which underlies social practices and make it an indissoluble part of identities. Following the authors' criticism, the excerpts suggest that dysconsciousness is operating, and recalling Omar's views in the previous excerpt, policies seem to play a crucial role in reproducing false ideas of equality. In this context, teachers also better position themselves on discourses of policy which, as reported by Ball et al. (2011), is perceived as official and consequently, right. In other words, policy confirms what Said (1976) calls 'a regime of truth', power that is mediated through discourse that subjectivises individuals to think of a self-evident truth. Nevertheless, teachers seem to keep their perception of a homogenous community which has no problems of misrecognition, indifference and discrimination. By having the idea of pluri-culturality defining racial identity in Colombia without the appropriate socio-historical critical reflection, racial inequality and injustice becomes blurred and unintelligible (Banks, 2002; Gillborn & Youdell, 2009). In this sense, pluri-culturality is a tag that produces dysconsciousness. [It connects people with ideas of equal relationships and avoids dealing with difference and disadvantage \(Leonardo & Norton, 2014\).](#)

Drawing on the analysis of Colombian racial identity made by Wade (1995) and from the view of CDA, by studying the composition of pluri-culturality it can also be said that pluri- is a prefix that involves multiplicity but this does not necessarily involve that multiplicity to be constituted by elements which are at the same level. Neither does it include a specification of what the singular elements are in compounding that multiplicity. Due to the absence of those clarifications, the term pluri-culturality triggers dysconsciousness. Dysconsciousness, in this case, works to create the habit of

not understanding clearly what happens in the social reality between racial groups and the rest of the Colombian society. It seems that in this lack of clarity, the elements of Colombian racial identity as pluri-cultural are perceived in terms of equality, sameness and harmony, as stressed by Omar when he says that thanks to the current national constitution, “*we started to move forward to have a unified Colombia.*” In this sense Gillborn (2006) asserts that the rhetoric of policy usually uses the terminology referring to anti-racism to make it attractive but it is not effected as such. As seen, teachers’ ideas of pluri-culturality overemphasise cultural descriptions that are ahistorical or that do not contextualise and problematise the conflictive elements involved. For King (1991), this approach to racial identity can even reproduce and stereotype without consciousness. In the case of Janeth, for example, she centres her ideas in the present of the country as a Colombian republic. As this was a commonplace in the teachers’ answers, it can be argued that there is a tendency to emphasise cultural factors rather than referencing conflictive racial issues. In this vein, policies stemming on a ‘balanced’ pluri-culturality (Wade, 2005) transmit an idea of racial identity which appears to teachers to be more equated and less discriminatory than (colonial) racial categories.

Paradoxically, this environment of equality is no longer sustained when referring to ‘racial’ groups separately. Some teachers argued that they do see inequality as a distinctive feature between the majority and the so called racial minorities. For instance,

***And how do you see indigenous groups in Colombia?***

***Irene:*** *Those groups are not in the same conditions of equity. So, these groups are not only in disadvantage economically but also, they lack political representation. Just after the constitution of 1991 they were recognised. However, this visibilisation has not been, many times, realised in practice. In other words, it has not been real. They have been recognised as part of our culture obviously but with very little economic possibilities, many social problems in the places where they live. With very little political participation. They really have very little participation in this state. Actually, there is a lot to do. There is a long way to go in the recognition of our ethnicities.*

Irene’s views provide a rather complete picture of her awareness of racial inequality in indigenous groups. She refers to two main points, economic disadvantage and political representation. As a social science teacher, she is informed about those factors and sees



them as critical in the recognition of all the Colombian society. However, her answers also reflect that this awareness is jeopardised by recognising them as a ‘different’ culture that needed to be recognised as part of ours (the majority). Apparently, what is seen in Irene’s ideas reflects the fact that the interest involved in policies for giving these communities recognition is a clear example of what Walton et al. (2018) discuss as inclusion also meaning, not belonging. In this case, she is reducing those unequal relationships into a matter of just cultural difference. This is confirmed in the following instance.

**Researcher:** *If I asked you how you describe yourself racially, what would you say?*

**Irene:** *well, the first thing that should be considered is that race, is human race. I mean, our species is a race. What we can talk about is ethnicities but these are oriented from the cultural point of view. But racially, that is a topic that has been instilled to us from our grandparents. And even from immemorial times, race has impacted several aspects of humanity but race, is human race. Ethnicity is what makes possible cultural differences and those cultures must start dialogue and there must be an agreement between them. In this way, there must be respect for their traditions.*

As seen in the extract, when addressing the ‘racial’ groups directly, Irene prefers to avoid the idea of racial difference because she considers it discriminatory and adopts ‘racial elision’ (Walton et al., 2018) in the homogenising discourse of human race.

Since these two discourses are working in parallel in her view, they seem to legitimise ethnicity as just cultural difference. It appears that inequality and disadvantage is also a matter derived from indigenous traditions and customs. Those traditions which in her own words, “*we have to respect.*” This discussion aligns with CRT which states that even though race as a concept is contested, the alternative discourses, such as that of ethnicity, hide the fact that it concerns racial minorities (Banton, 2002; Bernasconi, 2001; R. Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2004). The tendency to have a more balanced view of groups as reflected in the excerpts above shows that there is ambiguity between discourses of homogenisation and diversity which work by overlooking socio-economic and political advantage. The ambition to reach such a harmony without sufficient consideration of the historical, economic and political mechanisms of general society is what hides the aspects of inequality among different

groups. As seen, this is also indicative of dysconsciousness in the perception that teachers may develop.

Dysconsciousness in Irene's case seems to underlie her claims for the need to recognise indigenous people and that there must be a dialogue for that in which respect is a mediator. She does talk about the oppressing economic and political boundaries in the first excerpt but she talks about it as a matter of cultural recognition rather than as a matter of rights or socio-cultural and economic conditions. This view is problematic because it bestows dominant groups with the power to make decisions of recognition or not, obscuring the fact that racial inequality is also a structural problem. While the discourse of recognition coexists with the discourse of ethnicity as just cultural difference, dysconsciousness, as apparent in Irene's case, may lead people to downplay structural inequality.

Furthermore, Irene's excerpt shows not only a position that favours categories describing groups out of race - which may contradict the need to become aware of their disadvantage - but she also portrays people with other ethnicities as outsiders. In other words, the emphasis made on cultural differences that characterise these groups in relation to the rest of the population situate them as mono-cultural in opposition to pluri-cultural. The idea of singularising cultures as part of the description of groups is an instance of essentialisation (Woodward, 1997). In next chapter I fully explore this issue. Nevertheless, here it is necessary to emphasise that these examples show how discourses of pluri-culturality that have emerged from policies seem to foster teachers' dysconsciousness'. In this specific case, this configuration of identities also contributes to 'racial' inequality.

It seems that on the part of policy makers, stating a national identity as pluri-cultural in policy has implied a focus on an illusion of harmony which has little interest in changing the oppressing reality. This is a conclusion made after finding criticism on the indifference in the role of the government towards the minorities in the country (e.g. Hooker, 2005; Ng'Weno, 2007) and the similarities found in the teachers' discourse. This situation can also be compared to similar cases in England reported by Gillborn (2010) with regards to the interest to present multicultural policies while preserving an emphasis on national identity as British.

As seen, the participants' accounts show that the suggestion of a pluri-cultural identity included in policies creates a condensed and uniform picture of Colombians which at the same time also obscures aspects of disadvantage and marginalisation of other

ethnicities. In the same vein, as is apparent in teachers' descriptions, inequality is not addressed when referring to the pluri-culturality of Colombia. The blurred picture of inequality involved in Colombian racial identity works as dysconsciousness to understand the situation of 'racial' groups and consequently to see the race problem as irrelevant or excluded from the unified national identity. The following section will explore another area which seems to contribute to dysconsciousness and understanding race as a problem that needs to be considered.

### **Dysconsciousness in the intersection of class and race**

Another instance in which dysconsciousness affects teachers' perspectives of race is located in the intersections of race and class. [Rollock et al. \(2015\) extensively discuss intersections between race and class which make people interact strategically to overcome conflictive situations.](#) My view is different here since I try to explain the intersection of race and class as way to understand how race structures have become unnoticed in the Colombian territory and how this also seems to affect the teachers in [this study](#). As explained in chapter 2, the country was organised hierarchically in the colony: Spanish whites were located in (social, economic and cultural) privilege over indigenous groups and Afrodescendants. This organisation is certainly unclear today not only because of the establishment of policies of mestizaje since independence but also because of interracial mixture. Nonetheless, the hierarchy becomes clearer when analysing aspects of poverty and disadvantage; indigenous minorities and Afro-Colombians appear to be typically in the affected groups. This intersection between class and race has caused dysconsciousness in understanding the internal features of race and racism, which render these issues as irrelevant. The following excerpt illustrates how this problem of lack of importance given to race and racism tends to be manifested in indifference towards the so-called minority racial identities. It also shows how a misunderstanding of policies that are thought to remedy the problem, to some extent, cause racial discrimination. In talking about his views on racism in the country, one participant said:

***Martin:** No, we have overcome that [the race difference], a long time ago. I think that the gap is more with possessing or not. But not with being or not being. Here, in certain way, people are victimised (pobreteada) when they do not have the resources. But that does not have to do with the race colour or beliefs. Here it is more, "[this person] lives in certain neighbourhood, [she]*

*cannot have the resources to". It does not matter where that person comes from or who that person is. What is more, we go too far. I have always said, there is a displaced person who arrives in Bogota, and he receives resources. But I say, if I, as a Bogotan, where I have contributed [with taxes] all my life, lose my job, I am screwed (me Jodi). If I get threatened, I am screwed. Because I am not displaced. So, the problem has gone beyond the limit of possessing or not. But I think that the problem of skin colour, in Bogota, at least, that does not exist any longer.*

Martin's comment reflects that he accommodates a very common view among participants which is the denial of racial identity in disadvantage while they unwittingly support whiteness (cultural or economic) superiority. The participants' justification also suggests that dysconsciousness is operating in his thoughts to understand what happens in (racial) social relations because of the intersection with class. He first describes discrimination as something still happening but not exactly because of race (interpreted as skin colour); he refers to discrimination as part of status and more specifically strata. In other words, he does not see the relationship between economic discrimination and racial discrimination. He omits the fact that the acquisition of economic capital has been knotted in discourses of race. This omission of a historical explanation regarding the way that many 'racial' groups are now located in the low strata causes not only indifference towards minorities but also creates new imaginaries regarding the ideals of economic distribution in favour of 'territorialised identities' (Leonardo, 2002). Whiteness in this sense, encourages the participants to defend racism unwittingly and even blame minorities for their own disadvantage (Bell, 1992 in Rollock et al., 2015). The imaginaries created by whiteness are the reason why Martin interrogates the fact that the government helps groups such as displaced people and believes that a person like him, who has worked all his life in Bogota, could be more deserving of that help. As reported in chapter 2, many of those displaced people to whom Martin refers, have been (territorialised) indigenous and Afro-descendant people who have not found more alternatives than migrating to the city voluntarily or forcedly in search of improving their life (Koopman, 2012). The contextual and historical information is unknown by the participant and, as such, this works as part of dysconsciousness making 'racial' inequality a fuzzy perceived problem, that in Martin's view, instead of race, is an issue of class. In this context, it can be argued that the ambiguity and contradictions of an atmosphere of equality promoted in the national constitution makes it more difficult to

dismantle racial identity and, at the same time, blurs the borderlines between race and class.

There were other forms in which I could see teachers were subject of dysconsciousness that prevented them from fully understanding issues of racial identity(ies) in Colombia. I specifically refer to the incorporation of globalisation processes in the exercise of policy making and delivery. This is the aspect that I will now turn to.

## **White supremacy and educational policies, a discussion of epistemic violence**

This section centres attention on how teachers' ideas suggest that educational policies in general contribute to white supremacy and how this seems to shape teachers' educational practices and professionalism. [As described by Leonardo and Norton \(2014\), policies and curriculum are generally whiteness-centred not only because different communities are not represented in policy and curriculum design and because these are not developed democratically taking the whole community as participants of their construction.](#) Issues of this nature have been already part of the criticism made on dominant structures in education in the country (e.g. Federici et al., 2017; Zuniga, 1979), however, my emphasis in this case is to relate how those dominant discourses appear to produce discriminatory practices towards teachers as professionals and students as individuals. Through teachers' testimonies, it is possible to see that although they do not assume educational policies are neutral, the mechanisms that favour their development seem to lead them to assume them as such. This seems to work on teachers as power that governs their pedagogical decisions and reduce their agency. [Although my data suggested that teachers do develop agency in more informal conditions as characterised by Buchanan \(2015\); Edwards \(2015\); Pantić \(2015\); Toom, Pyhältö, and Rust \(2015\) \(for example in informal meetings with colleagues where teachers share ideas and undertake projects to enhance learning opportunities to students\), I did not focus on this aspect because my interest was to identify race structures in education. This emphasis on structures precisely allows to show how, despite teachers' agency, discrimination and inequality are reproduced in the teaching and social practice in general. My emphasis in this study was to identify carefully the circumstances and the modes in which racial structures are reproduced in education to raise teachers'](#)

awareness on that issue and through this to be able to determine future possibilities for agency towards social change in terms of discrimination.

Other studies that focused on those issues of structural aspects limiting teachers' agency were reported in Biesta et al (2015). My research adds to those studies the focus on racial structures. This emphasis allows to understand that beyond representing (white) power, policies and their mechanisms can also contribute to inequality and professional discrimination, as I will show below.

As seen in the preceding section, the power exerted in policies is usually exerted by dominant groups - for example by the government which has frequently been formed by the old inherited (white elites), as is the case in Colombia or the global organisations that now intervene as advisors to generation of policy (as reported in chapter 2). This is what some have referred to as white supremacy (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006). White supremacy has been reflected in education and general policies in their understanding as universals of truth (Gillborn, 2006). This dominance has been presented by CRT as oppressive because it marginalises minorities who are in disadvantage and contributes to maintaining race structures (Leonardo & Norton, 2014; Rollock, Gillborn, Vincent, & Ball, 2015). Postcolonialists have added that such universals imply a connection between knowledge and power that exercises 'epistemic violence.' Epistemic violence, as discussed in chapter 3, is a concept that coincides with white supremacy as it refers to the perpetuation of the configuration of inferiority in the colonised for the purposes of (white) domination (Banks, 2002; Castro-Gómez, 2005a; Leonardo, 2002).

Following this point, Banks (2002) as well as others have also made explicit that no knowledge is neutral and wherever there is knowledge, there is power (Foucault, 2012). As shown below, even though teachers in this case expressed they are not really accepting educational policies as neutral for different reasons (e.g. policies as decontextualised, unawareness on the part of policy makers about realities of practice), they also suggest that policies in the end are followed without amendments anyway because of the lack of time, spaces or motivation for them to be critical about those policies. The conditions these teachers describe confirm how racial structures represented in policy mechanisms reduces teachers' agency as discussed by Biesta et al. (2015). These authors further go into this saying that

...actors always act by means of their environment rather than simply in their environment [so that] the achievement of agency will always result from the interplay of

individual efforts, available resources and contextual and structural factors .... (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 137; as cited in Biesta et al. (2015)).

Since the mechanisms that are part of those available resources and contextual factors for policy making appear restricted to teachers, a reduction of agency impacts their professional practice and whiteness-centred structures reproduce inequality. Because of these restrictive conditions, teachers end up aligning with ‘common’ discourses that objectify practices favouring whiteness. In this regard, some teachers express how they think policies are “*considerable guidelines that are relevant to their practice*” (*Hilda*) even though they are not perfect.

Hammersley and Nias (1999) are critical about the way policies have become gradually more prescriptive of teachers’ duties. According to them, this prescriptive tendency of policy making and its delivery has closed opportunities for teachers to reflect and propose alternatives. Teachers’ aligning with these ‘common practices’ preserves the status quo and encourages the reproduction of inequality. This is what is described as a process of structuration that changes the individuals’ capacity to act because they become engaged with common social practices that are framed as dominant (Buchanan, 2015).

From the view of race, these policies are not opening a space for non-white voices to construct knowledge. The view of policy mainly as guidelines and the lack of conditions to critically reflect upon it, may lead teachers to value those guidelines overlooking the fact that they may not contribute to generating forms of understanding and conceptualising their own teaching perspectives either (Hammersley & Nias, 1999). In other cases, where teachers appear to have the space to critically reflect upon policy, it seems that this work is also constrained if not by time conditions, then by freedom of speech. Therefore, in the frame of neutrality or correctness in which policies are assumed, this is interpreted as violating the law.

***Researcher: in schools, there are generally meetings in which teachers meet to discuss policies. Do you have those meetings and what do you discuss if they exist?***

***Gina: well, I would dare to say that in this school, to try to discuss policies is...is to be subversive. So, in these circumstances, in some schools and, especially in this one, what people do is to apply the policy. So, to be against the policy is far too complicated.***

As seen in this conversation with Gina, in the absence of opportunities and freedom for critical reflection, teachers are led to work along the parameters the policies provide. As Gina explains, any attempt to oppose policy is likely to be rejected and perceived as “*subversive*.” The rejection of contestation or the limiting of spaces to be critical about policies have been reported as part of white supremacy in studies made by Leonardo (2002); Gillborn and Ladson-Billings (2004). According to these theorists, these factors are described as common ground of the white elites who are interested in keeping their power and maintaining their interests behind claims of objectivity. In this case, white supremacy takes the shape of policies that are supposed to benefit everyone and that just need to be followed and applied.

As noted, despite the apparently restricted nature of opportunities to reflect critically upon policy, instances of agency on the part of teachers were also identified. For example, as reported below some teachers are more eager to engage in critical examination of the external demands presented in policies. Nonetheless, as is also suggested in Hector’s account, in these cases, the apparent neutrality of policies and the application of the ‘common’ practice (Ball et al., 2011) end up playing a major role in the dynamics of policy interpretation and translation. For example, Hector says that circumstances of pressure cause some teachers to be influenced by their peers. In this case, the ones who want to initiate a discussion about policy end up being persuaded with the idea that the policies are clearly delivered and there is no reason to resist or even discuss them.

**Hector:** ...there has not been discussion about the policies. It has never taken place. Very little... the only discussions that could happen, it was because there was a huge reform and that teachers had to be together to hear that. But the decision was already taken. The decisions were taken by the director and coordination. Apart from that, let’s shut that teacher up because from this discussion we will have nothing.... there is already a discussion about the state policies, at district level, nationally about education. So, some [new critical teachers] arrived... and there are discussions around policies. But those meetings are too closed (son muy cerradas). Because there is a group of colleagues who say that this is something that shouldn’t be discussed. Because here we must do what the policy says because this is what we are paid for... So, the discussions start first, trying to discuss if we should discuss or not. So, when we get to the conclusion that we will discuss. Something that has happened after



*a long time. Then, the discussion is... well that is not like that. I mean, this is more a political fight more than a political discussion...*

It follows that in contexts where policies are imposed without enough reflection on what they mean, white supremacy tends to be favoured too, through, for example, curricular content and the way it is addressed (Banks, 2002; Ladson-Billings & Gillborn, 2004).

*Aligned with this view and drawing also on principles of postcolonialism, I found how,* in teachers' perceptions of education, knowledge works in complicity with Eurocentric discourses (Rizvi, Lingard, & Lavia, 2006). A case illustrating the tendency to accept the apparent universality of Eurocentric values has to do with teachers' professional formation. That is, the information that teachers have been exposed throughout their professional background embeds values and ideologies that teachers appropriate and use as the basis of the knowledge they share with students. For example, in talking about models of life they used for their children to follow, this is the example Raul (a Spanish teacher) used:

***Researcher: who would be a life model that you could use with your students?***

***Raul: no, I don't do it. I, hmm....Maybe sometimes when we are talking about a writer or of someone important for literature or something like that...***

***Researcher: can you give me an example of that?***

***Raul: maybe I have done it with Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. Well, I sometimes try to talk a lot about him and I take him as an example. A person that had so many difficulties .... But despite of that he was able to write the master book in the Spanish language, Don Quixote***

In his role as a Spanish teacher, Raul does not indicate that he questions the way he has constructed values in his life perspective. The images of heroes that represent the Spanish tradition are taken as a valuable symbol to teach his students. Therefore, this keeps on fostering colonial values as universal, in this case, by praising white supremacy represented by white/European heroes of the colonial tradition.

By taking for granted the values of power in the dominant discourse underlying the knowledge of his subject matter, Raul seems to assume that he needs to commit mainly to the (symbolic) values endorsed by the language he teaches. As suggested by various postcolonial authors (Castro-Gómez, 2005b; Said, 1976; Spivak, 1988), this is an example of the subjectification of the colonised which gives power to the coloniser without consciousness. This reaffirms how teachers' perceptions seem to be guided to

see the world mainly from one direction. From that perspective, teachers tend not to question **what they have learned and why they learned it** and why they have to teach it to students. In other words, students are presented with these ‘universal’ values and common practices and they tend to assume them uncritically and in turn adopt them as part of their own identity.

Raul’s example focuses on the impact of a curriculum that guides knowledge in whiteness-centred values at a macro-level. Coming back to the analysis of policy in relation to the values it foregrounds as well, the following is another example of how white supremacy operates in the ways teachers perceive the development of wider policies:

***Martin:** You can see that they [policies] are not so remote, what happens is that we are resistant. For example, some time ago I was revising some standards, and I think they coincide exactly with what I was doing. And after I reflected on what was happening, and the mistakes. I said,... but this is the same. The only problem was the way I was looking at it. The problem was inside me! When I stopped resisting I could see that I could find a link and I realised that in here, the standards are not done by an ignorant person. They are set by a group of important teachers. From important universities in Bogota (...)*

Without displaying consciousness of the epistemic violence and whiteness that govern his gaze, Martin appropriates the objective discussion of what is (not) right which undermines the critical reflection on the knowledge he acquires. He does not only talk about the importance of the policy represented in standards, he also highlights whiteness represented in their professional suitability of policy advisors by stating that they are ‘important teachers’, from ‘important universities.’ What is not mentioned is that these teachers and universities are often part of elites and that under the parameters of neoliberal policies in education, they tend to serve their own interests first (Libreros, 2002). The standards established by these groups are then used as benchmarks to evaluate and classify institutions, teachers and students. From the view of CRT, this maintenance of opportunities for those who already have access and limiting them to those who lack them, is feeding the unfair racialised system (R. Delgado & Stefancic, 2000).

The previous view of policy has consequences in practice. One of the crucial consequences is that teachers (who are in the classroom) are limited to doing a technical job and instead of producing knowledge, policy is making teachers (Ball et al., 2011).

That is, in the field of teachers' professionalism, the lack of teachers' participation in policy making is producing teachers as technicians (see further on this in chapter 2) while important decisions of education are chiefly made by the ones in power to gain more power. In turn, the lack of reflection upon policy is also maintaining an unfair system that organises students in parameters of inferiority and superiority. I will now turn to discuss these two issues of educational policies in detail.

### **White supremacy and effects on teaching work**

As shown above, it is apparent in teachers' perceptions that white supremacy also wields discriminatory power relations that lead them to take up the role of technicians. As has already been criticised by Federici et al. (2017) or Zuniga (1979), this role implies that teachers' practice is reduced to a mechanical endeavour with little or no room for critical reflection (Ball et al., 2011; Hammersley & Nias, 1999; Korthagen, 2001). In these circumstances, as Janeth emphatically regrets, policies are presented to them as imperatives of what is urgent and necessary and teachers are expected to simply find a way to comply:

***Researcher: do you have spaces in which you can discuss policies in school?***

***Janeth:*** Yes, but. Well what happens is that precisely. In this, Colombia has been characterised because we put into practice all the policies that come from wherever. Because it is nice to take the position of another country. So, they bring it and want us to apply it in any way. So, in other places people are talking about 'cycles', whatever. So, teachers have to develop all the policies that the Ministry [of education] desires to implement. I feel that in that hurry of implementing "other things" we have forgotten about OUR things and we have forgotten to talk about important things. I think that we do not reflect about that anymore and I feel that the teachers' meeting ends up in "how do we comply with this or that" But to develop a debate of those policies? I don't think so.

In addition to her claims about the impositions that the law suggests in its execution, Janeth stresses the tendency in planning to copy foreign models. The discussion of the historical development of education in Colombia (chapter 2) in this case, confirms that whiteness is represented in the preference for European models in a system that favours copying and borrowing policies in education.

On the other hand, since policies have gradually come to be more specific in terms of prescribing teachers' work (Ball et al., 2011; Hammersley & Nias, 1999), these directly govern teachers' practices while limiting their agency (Biesta et al., 2015). Policies are generally fostered as objective experience that should subordinate teachers' expertise (Federici et al., 2017; Biesta et al., 2015). This resonates with what Ball et al (2011) call performativity. He uses this term to argue that teachers, in dealing with external pressures from policies, are likely to end up being subjects that are defined by responsiveness to policy rather than by principle (Ball et al., 2011). Put differently, teachers are led to prioritise government's demands focusing on showing results or attaining goals. As Omar states,

*Omar: ...Now, the school is involved in a project with the Ministry of Education, which is [called] quality, the quality of education and they measure us in relation to standards. Standards with which in my view, I do not agree. Standards like: the school is quality if: first, the majority of students do not fail their course. Second, if most students do not fail any subject. Looking at the number of students who do not fail subjects. So, the indexes to measure the quality of education are not convincing. There must be another strategy. But ok. Those are parameters that are sent at the international level...*

In this numerical approach described by Omar, the teachers' pedagogical knowledge is undermined. They are not expected to propose pedagogical alternatives but to produce measurable results. This neoliberal thinking which leads teachers to focus their efforts on the production of material results and the attainment of standards has been criticised by Leonardo (2002); Gillborn and Ladson-Billings (2004) and other CRTs as part of white supremacy. This is because, as explained above, white elites also direct policies to take advantage of their power and favour their interests. In the context of globalisation, those white elites are represented more importantly by International institutions that have gradually gained more power in making decisions for the country. As Omar stated ironically, teachers have to accept those rules as mandates because '*those are parameters that are set at the international level*'. In other words, whiteness represented in the international intervention to policy making, subordinate teachers' ideas and eliminates them as participants of this policy production. By the same token, they are undervalued as powerful professionals who can contribute to the development of their own career. This touches on the second consequence of white supremacy on teachers' practice I would like to discuss: racism towards students.

## **Racism towards students**

It can be argued in light of the data that there are other discriminatory implications derived from the application of neoliberal policies and whiteness-centred. Following Gillborn (2010); Leonardo and Norton (2014) and Bradbury (2013), white supremacy in education can also be seen as the orientation towards the accomplishment of standards that international organisations determine (e.g. PISA Tests, International English exams and SABER national exams towards reaching conditions to become part of the OECD). This orientation, as we will see, seems to be producing discriminatory practices against students. This is evident in the tendency to position students as inferior in the frame of the dominant culture which, may further oppress more marginalised students. This is explained by Kozol (1991, in Leonardo & Norton, 2014) as school mimicking of the social structures in which segregation, getthoisation and abandonment come over those who do not reach the expected standards. In this specific case, as teachers reported, educational practices are expected to be arranged to keep up with foreign goals. Those goals usually establish a threshold of achievements for students when evaluated at an international level, and, at the same time, idealise students following the parameters of (white) dominant discourses. Hence, the students who do not meet the parameters are qualified as at risk (or bad) and, are consequently, undervalued (Gillborn, 2006; Leonardo & Norton, 2014)).

In connection with the idea of performativity discussed earlier, students' needs are not addressed at an individual level and techniques in standard formats are generic. Then, if students fail, the attention is focused on how to improve the techniques and obtain better results rather than on exploring how the desired goals and such techniques are really aligned with students' needs (Ladson-Billings & Gillborn, 2004). In this view, teachers have been led to conclude that all students are thought to have the same opportunities because their achievements are being measured in the same way. Federici et al. (2017) had already discussed this phenomenon as the effect caused by policies that introduce objectified images of students. Since it is predetermined, this objectification causes teachers to generate contempt for not expected academic achievement. In the words of critical race theorists, this generates institutional racism consisting of the desire to align with the white law (Gillborn, 2006; Vincent, Ball, Rollock, & Gillborn, 2013). It follows that teachers' ideas of students' success tend to be built on how much effort

they put into reaching goals described in standards disregarding the socio-economic and cultural barriers they may encounter. The following excerpt illustrates this point:

**Researcher:** *how do you see the Colombian education in comparison with other countries?*

**Marioc:** *Well, it is very bad. Because the standards for quality of education have decreased a lot and many liberties have been allowed now. And I know that the world is changing, but at the same time there is exclusion.*

**Researcher:** *what do you mean?*

**Marioc:** *It means that only the good students are chosen for opportunities. Then, I say to students to be a good student is boring because you must be dedicated and they really want to do other things. However, if they want to be bad students, they do not have to do anything.*

In this case, Marioc identifies that policies can be discriminatory but he does not find a choice other than pushing students to work hard to reach policy goals. This idea of hard work is criticised by CRTs who believe that by encouraging individual goals, mainly fuelled by neoliberal policies, the racial structures remain untouched and this belief actually supports the imbalanced system (R. Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). Fostering hard work in Marioc's students is in itself well intentioned. [However, in line with a CRT perspective, this seems to automatically bring other attitudes and behaviours into the evaluation of students' performance that, in search of efficiency, end up reproducing inequality \(Leonardo & Norton, 2014\).](#) For instance, whilst Marioc highlights the hard work necessary to reach goals, he also evaluates Colombian education as generally poor with regards to standards. In addition to this, he also misrecognises the diversity of environments the students belong to and the impact that background may have on their chances of success. As reported by Antony, some students live in areas of poverty surrounded by environments of familiar violence, prostitution, alcoholism and drug addiction. Frequently, those students being part of the affected 'racial' minorities, find quite hard to achieve a high level of external motivation to study because they first have to overcome the social problems that surround them. At the same time, competition and failure might also generate students' construction of negative images of themselves as they feel 'unable' to reach the goals proposed. These consequential attitudes bring both a legitimisation of inferiority as well as a reaffirmation of the structural (white) elite power (Gillborn & Youdell, 2009; Ladson-Billings & Gillborn, 2004).

Even though the social problems described by Antony were not reported by all the teachers in this study as part of their students' environment, the point is that evaluating students with those differences under the same criteria of hard work requires the affected students to overcome structural inequality and racism, not only nationally but also globally. Although teachers' attitudes can be regarded as beneficial, they might actually be discriminatory because the inequalities derived from race and socio-economic conditions which can act against students' performance are not considered. At the same time, these ideas re-inscribe the traces that colonial thinking has left (Hall, 1990).

As has been confirmed by studies in the UK and USA by Gillborn and Ladson-Billings (2004), education usually reaffirms white supremacy by giving more opportunities to the ones who have more power and favourable conditions. Gillborn and Ladson-Billings refer for example to how benefits for poor schools are given to favour the white system, not necessary to social transformation (2004). This situation is also evident in Colombia where opportunities (e.g. scholarships, grants, loans, etc.) are offered to students or teachers in terms of competition. This competition implies that teachers and schools need to focus their efforts on producing tangible results represented in exams, tests and other kinds of demonstrations rather than students, teachers or the community itself. This is implicit in Marioc's answer as he acknowledges the need to work hard to reach '*something*' or not to do '*anything*' to reach nothing. Nowadays all the mechanisms in state schools to qualify for benefits seem to be mediated by those requirements (For more information see MEN, 2017). In this dynamic of competition, the gap between under-resourced and well-equipped schools is broadened as well as between students who have access or not to privilege.

So far in this chapter I have analysed issues of whiteness, white supremacy and dysconsciousness that have underpinned teachers' perceptions of educational practices at the level of policy and curriculum and their impact on racial identities. I will now centre the discussion on how teachers' perceptions suggest they are impacted by other racial structures and how this comes to bear in their perceptions of racial identities.

### **Globalisation and the need to rethink racial identities**

Teachers also showed in their descriptions that they perceived society as changing and that these changes demand new attitudes in social interaction. This feeling is manifested

in teachers' accounts as the need to change old paradigms of life for the acquisition of more modern and universal patterns. In this sense, discourses of race appear to be in contradiction. This is because while globalisation indicates an updated and positive view of society, race is considered an old concept with negative connotations. In this context, teachers tended to emphasise a need to switch the discourse of racial identities towards what they consider to be more open and harmonic views of identity. Antony for example, associates race with conflict and trouble for society in general. He sees that instead, the discourse on race-related issues embedded in globalisation has generated an opportunity to "live together."

***Researcher: What do you understand by race?***

***Antony:*** *I associate that idea with what is black, with Hindi and the indigenous people and whites. That is what I think when I think of human races. What I understand about race is, that there are different races around the world. And, that there has been a lot conflict because of race. And they have been also violent. And that now, in a more globalised world we have the opportunity to live together with different races in a single context and in a kind way. In fact, there is already a lot of interracial children too (hay mucho cruce de razas). That is what I understand.*

Race in this excerpt is associated with backwardness and conflict in contrast with the ideas of globalisation. At the same time, globalisation appears to be a factor of advance and more universal ideas which allow conviviality among people. According to Castro-Gómez (2005b) and Leonardo (2002), this is a very popular discourse that has been fuelled strongly by international alliances in the contemporary dynamics of globalisation and by neoliberal discourses that have marked difference in terms of economic capital (Mignolo, 2000). In this vein, they also point out with suspicion the fact that these discourses are Eurocentric is not foregrounded. Consequently, racist structures are not perceived and discriminatory discourses are transformed in new shapes (Leonardo, 2002).

As suggested in Antony's answer, the desire to overcome ideas of racial difference seems to be motivated mainly by a perceived need to transform the world. The discussion of Eurocentric discourses that connect interests of powerful nations to preserve their status seems to be overlooked as part of the participants' interest. Following the view of Leonardo (2002) and Castro Gomez (2005b), this lack of



knowledge with regard to the interests involved in preserving racial structures, can be considered another case of a partial view of social reality from the view of CRT.

Postcolonial theories also have a word to say in this respect. They consider that the picture of inequality fades out in the dynamics of globalisation by inculcating a homogenising non-conflictive narrative of identity (Castro-Gómez, 2005b; Said, 1976; Spivak, 1988). Following those views, it can be argued that despite these apparently non-conflictual relationships, there is in fact a continuity in maintaining discriminatory and exclusory dynamics based primarily on the distinctions of the first and third world that also come with globalisation (Leonardo, 2002). This is an aspect that acts ideologically on colonised countries by strengthening a dependence on colonisers (Bradbury, 2013).

As suggested in teachers' statements, enforced by globalisation and the alliances with international institutions that continuously situate the first and the third world, pluriculturalism seems to be the most appropriate notion to align their alleged neutral discourses (Mignolo, 2005). However, these discourses obscure the fact that the third and the first world are also oppositional discourses that mark difference and reaffirm otherness (Spivak, 1988). As evident in Antony's account, teachers align those discourses without awareness of those relations implied and the complex relations of power associated and less the ones associated with race. They simply adopt them as part of their harmonic mantras of conviviality. On the other hand, as suggested by Ball et al. (2011), in the case of global policies, teachers tend to be seen with the illusion that they are neutral. Consequently, this shows that dysconsciousness operates to blur the understanding of the way policies work as whiteness-centred. Thus, the alleged neutrality of policies in fact seems to reflect the effects of power structures on policy making and understanding and consequently the way teachers perceive racial identities are constructed.

### **Media reinforcing whiteness-centred discourses and otherness**

Media is an important means of communication which is frequently approached without consciousness of the dominant discourses involved. In the case of this study, analysis of white supremacy and otherness was used experimentally through teachers' perceptions to reach understanding of the impact of those discourses. In this view, it was suggested in the data that power relations with media are entangled in the

constructions of meaning developed by teachers in their perceptions but they are not as direct as they are in policies. As in the case of media, power relations work more at the level of desire rather than imposition, those relations derive from teachers as audiences of media in the consumption of information. In the same vein, influence of these on teachers' educational practices tends to be more unconscious.

In this context, teachers were asked in the interviews about the contact that they had with media and they said that they were reluctant to use television and social media neither for personal entertainment and information nor for pedagogical purposes in their lessons. However, they sometimes also made explicit that information taken from the magazines, television, the radio and the news is significant in keeping them updated about daily events. Drawing on Van Dijk's (1993) conclusions about the strong impact of racist discourses in media as a dominant discourse, it is possible to assert that media may represent an important source of influence to shape teachers' perceptions of racial identities. This shaping of perceptions is what CD analysts such as Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) would call language and ideology constituting subjects. In this case, the language is produced as imagery on the screening of racial identities. For example, Omar's perceptions of indigenous communities seem to have been shaped by representations of these groups in the media. In reporting some of the ideas he has about indigenous groups, he recalls a case shown on TV:

***Omar:** For example, a robbery. I, the last punishment that I saw, in an indigenous community. Ehh, they made the criminals stand in a hole full of ants so, they must be with the ants for as long as they are told because they had robbed another indigenous person. And, ok. I think that is a punishment that works as an example. And that does not put the individual in a closed place as such. But they teach him that, the punishment like that, well. I wonder, how much I would bear that myself.*

***Researcher:** Was that something you got from the news?*

***Omar:** It was in the news. Not only that one, there are many [similar cases]. You can see many on television.*

This is an example of how, thanks to media, Omar seems to construct images of indigenous people and their practices. The teacher in this case seems to appropriate the images represented on TV and take them as 'the truth'. The way he explains the scene displays the reliance he puts on the information he is exposed to. It could also be argued then that because the teachers showed in general more reliance on news programmes,

this example also suggests that representations of ‘race’ in the news tend not to be questioned. Therefore, media in this way appears to be a strong source of influence on teachers’ development of their perceptions.

The discussion related to how racial representations take a shape in teachers’ perceptions will be discussed in the section about essentialisation of identities in the next chapter. For now, I am interested in discussing how power relations represented in the media appear to indirectly reinforce white supremacy mainly through visual imagery. This analysis is pertinent because it shows that teachers’ perceptions of racial identities are constructed not only on the basis of racial discourses that circulate at official levels, such as the one in policy but also at more informal levels, such as the one in media. Thus, this confirms the importance of taking media into account in order to see how sources of knowledge construct ideas of race. The constructions of racial identity that teachers build, as will be seen mainly throughout the next chapter, are relevant to understanding how they seem to affect the way they approach educational practices too.

From another view, it is important to consider Van Dijk (1993) who eloquently explains that in Europe, white dominant discourse in the media is present not only at the level of representations but also at the level of production of information. In the former case, he refers to the imagery which can be compared with Omar’s example where the media produces unconscious fixed characterisations of indigenous groups in the minds of their audience. According to the author, these images of media continually represent whites in privilege while minorities are misrepresented. In the latter case, Van Dijk (1993) refers to the ownership that white Europeans have over big communication enterprises which set the agenda in the industry of public opinion. In other words, those who own the communication enterprise (famous magazines, television channels, radio, national press, and social media) use information to their convenience (to keep whiteness on the top) and disregard minority groups consciously and unconsciously. The organisation of racial divisions in Colombia becomes more difficult to see because skin colour is not a distinctive feature among Colombians, rather, the privilege represented in family heritage of the oldest and wealthiest families in the country does represent racial structures in intersection with class in media production. The bias produced in information as part of unbalanced interest in the communication industry is suspected by teachers. For example, some teachers noted that wealthy families owning the television channels, newspapers and the most important radio stations in the country are

part of the historical elites (c.f. FECOLPER, 2015), who use these media at their convenience. Irene, for example, says

*Irene: It is not a secret that the owners of media are enterprises that make them biased and they present particular news. According to their own interests. And this is what makes us think that the news should be seen from the critical stance. This is why we have to see media with a particular critical view.*

As seen, Irene finds rather dubious the quality of information they get when consuming the media because it seems to be clear that the information is likely to be biased. However, as race is not clear, teachers appear not to reflect on those discourses implying racial structures too.

This unrecognition of race underlying discourses might contribute to the symbolic power about the image of white that appears to be part of the general identity of Colombians, as will later be shown. It can also be said that this is imbued in educational practices in how teachers perceive their world as part of their influence. Further examples of the impact of images of white symbolic power on educational practices are illustrated in the section which outlines new modes of cultural essentialisation in the next chapter. It is evident how images of whiteness are used as models that support aspects of good manners and successful behaviour that teachers want to stress for their students to be able to survive in contemporary society. For example, Hilda advises her students to play white by: wearing nice clothes and accommodating to the society standards (see chapter 6, section: educational practices under cultural essentialisation, second extract). As will also be seen in the next chapter, this symbolic power might also be represented in white privilege in the perceived mestizo identity. For now, I will move on to explore how, in this context of whiteness-centred discourses, teachers have experienced recent policies of ethno-education and inclusion and have tried to translate them into practice. This is an important discussion since, as I explained in chapter 2, through these policies, teachers' educational practices and their views of racial identities are also shaped.

## **Racial identity, the impact of policies of ethno-education**

This section centres attention on how teachers perceive policies of ethno-education and how the practices and discourses that they describe seem to contribute to how they perceive their educational practices in connection with racial identities. As explained in

chapter 2, educational policies in Colombia have explicitly enhanced the idea that Colombian identity must be seen as pluri-cultural which has served to officially recognise ethnic minority identities. Intriguingly, this enhancement has come about in parallel with practices that have sustained power relations centred on whiteness, as reported in this chapter. Policies of ethno-education have been derived from the national recognition of pluri-culturality. Therefore, analysing teachers' perceptions on this topic is central to achieving an understanding of how these policies come to shape racial identities and educational practices. In light of this, I will explain here how policies of ethno-education seem to have been interpreted by teachers and how those interpretations suggest views of identity. I will also point out how policies of ethno-education seem to have translated mainly as colour blind attitudes which seem to have shaped teachers' practices as well.

As matter of understanding the way policy takes a shape in practice, the theory of policy enactment provides some tools (Ball et al., 2012). Enactment implies interpretation and translation of policies. This means, after reflection (interpretation), there are usually mechanisms that help to put the policy into practice (translation). The way teachers recall the policy of ethno-education seems to have been poor as part of reflection. Then, it seems to have been forcibly translated with little work in interpretation. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that the factors that lead teachers' practices to be in consonance with policies of racial inclusion are not necessarily found in their sensitisation or reflection of these policies. [Leonardo and Norton \(2014\) suggest that to balance curriculum practices, more non-white communities should take part in curriculum development. This process would improve the interpretation stage of policy translation. However, as shown in this case, no teacher reported having developed this or other activities for sensitisation in relation to these new policies of ethno-education.](#)

Teachers' interpretations of ethno-education policies are varied. While for some, ethno-education refers to the inclusion of ethnic minority students, for others this is related to the inclusion of multi-cultural contents in the curriculum. One of the most common interpretations of the policy is its association with the cross-curricular subject of Afro-Colombian studies (see chapter 2 for discussion on this). As an application of this policy requires, some teachers in the study considered that ethno-education has meant additional work for some, which they have found difficult to cope with, while for some others ethno-education does not seem not to have effected any change at all in practice. Wilmar (the coordinator, one of the participants in this study)'s words are illuminating

in this respect: *“in the absence of a multicultural community, there is no need for a multicultural education.”*

Since all the different perspectives on ethno-education or multiculturalism were common in teachers' answers, the last perspective raises three different misconceptions: i) that the notion of multiculturalism is associated with minority groups such as indigenous or Afro-Colombians only; ii) that it is possible to have homogenous groups; and thus, iii) is addressed only to differentiated racial groups. These can be misconceptions because some have asserted that any human group is considered multicultural (Canclini, 2004), that culture is not static and uniform (Hall, 1990) and that the groups that are not racialised do not need any sensitisation at all. It can be argued then, that those misconceptions relate to what postcolonial theories have criticised as complicity in reinscribing discourses of power that separate views on binaries of inferiority and superiority (Castro-Gomez, 2000; Said, 1976; Spivak, 1988). While teachers perceive that policies of ethno-education have focussed on the recognition of minorities, the implications of the way they interpret them seem to maintain power relations through epistemic violence. Epistemic violence is equated here to what CRTs have criticised as misrecognition of disadvantage and believing that society is divided in universal values. This is suggested not only because teachers adopt those misconceptions as regimes of truth and reaffirm otherness in the colonial gaze (e.g. indigenous as different from the norm) but also because they seem to perceive policies of ethno-education as colour-blind approaches (ethno-education is to get everybody at the same academic level) (R. Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Yosso, 2005).

Colour-blind attitudes and practices was the common ground that was captured from teachers' perceptions of ethno-education during the interviews. Criticised by CRT theorists, the understanding that colour-blind practice in the view of the participants in this study means 'everybody has the right to study'. Therefore, on occasions where new students from different ethnic backgrounds arrive at the classrooms, teachers in this study say they do open their classroom doors for them. However, these attitudes also suggest that there is no sensitisation at all in terms of what inclusion in 'racial' terms mean or what it implies as part of curricular and pedagogical reflection. Here is an example of how teachers perceive ethno-education has been taking place and how the situation reflects teachers' colour-blind approaches as its main approach:

***Researcher: Did they [indigenous children] arrive because of anything special, any policy or something? Or is it just a coincidence?***

*James: It is a coincidence. In fact, when...there is a special group to work with the indigenous population here in Bogota and the black racial population too. And, the Secretary of Education locates them in different schools in which there are places. But there isn't a special school for them. They gradually adapt them to the school like every normal child. Under the idea to guarantee education for all of them, they [The Secretary of Education] put them in those schools without knowing how they will adapt or how the school will adapt to them. So, obviously, their academic achievement will be, well, inferior to the other children. Starting with the language, as they do not know the language, they don't speak Spanish and, as such, they have to learn it ...forcibly, I would say (a la furze).*

The discourses and practices displayed above by the teacher in policies of ethno-education also seem to shape the teachers' discourse on how they perceive educational practices. First of all, students are required to become part of a community while being involved with policy which entails strong elements of assimilation and acculturation which takes for granted 'difference' (Rollock, Gillborn, Vincent, & Ball, 2015). These processes also involve taken for granted ideas that indigenous children necessarily have to adapt to school "like every normal child" assuming opposition with the dominant discourse of homogenisation. Additionally, there is an assumption that elements of the identity in these groups (such as language) are translated into prescriptive academic underachievement. This teacher's perspective portrays the epistemic violence that commands his ideas. Even though the teacher assumes his best position is to provide colour blind attitudes, the dominant discourses keep on reinforcing racial structures. The teacher assumes mestizo as the norm, while the other (indigenous in this case) is seen as inferior. Not speaking the language (Spanish), for instance, is an aspect of inferiority that underlines those racial structures.

Some other teachers considered the application of colour-blindness differently but the result seems to be similar. The effects of institutional racism produce teachers to reproduce it without awareness. This is presented as indifference towards racial structures and the sense of inability to produce any change. For example, although Omar perceives that ethnic inclusion is slowly happening at the institutional level, he does not feel this is his own responsibility. Therefore, his translation of the policy implies the assumption that efforts from his side to change 'racial' relations are not necessary:

**Researcher: have you ever lived those [racial division] experiences in your practice?**

**Omar:** Yes, of course. ... Generally, *costeños* (racialised Afro-Colombians) always walk together and “*los rolos*” (people from Bogota) do the same, from the classrooms. They go together very frequently. (*muy juntos*). And very few times they are together with others. The blackies will always be with the blacky ones, without being discriminatory (clarifying).

**Researcher: Have you done anything about these dynamics that happen among students?**

**Omar:** To do something? Noo. I treat everybody the same way. But, to do something like, I will mix these people to.... nooo, to be honest I do not see the need. I probably think that those are some aspects that must be considered at the institutional level but that's it.

The example shows how the teacher's consideration of the colour-blind approach as an institutional responsibility only leads him to translate the policy in his practice as colour-blind too. Colour-blind in this case for the teachers means to do nothing, to ignore that racial structures appear to be influencing students' attitudes through their 'racial' grouping. Omar believes that the institution is the one responsible for ethnic inclusion, not him. The lack of sensitisation in the race conflict along with policy translation, as well as the reinscription of dominant racial discourses cause these effects that are reflected in teachers' unwitting lack of commitment and indifference towards racial issues in practice. As is apparent in the data, not curricular reform has occurred to develop a multicultural perspective of education. On the contrary, whiteness-centred commands what teachers have to do and this for 'minorities' has not meant no much beyond schools opening their doors for them.

As suggested before, the intention to enact policies of ethno-education and inclusion without critical reflection may have also contributed to the perpetuation of perceptions of racial identity in inequality. As Walton, et al. (2018) assert, policies appear to be celebrating otherness that exclude non-white communities. Thus, racism is perpetrated under the guise of good intentions. The data confirms that in the way educational policies have been implemented in Latin America, there is a risk of developing those policies as an aggregate of race and ethnicities that indeed isolate indigenous people and Afro-descendants and continue reproducing the colonialist logics (Bello & Rangel, 2000). This is something that has also been criticised in other contexts such as the USA



(Leonardo & Norton, 2014). Similar examples in which this view is represented in educational practices are described in the next chapter. In general, it appears that the colonial gaze and the application of colour-blind approaches in education with little work in interpreting the implications of the law can legitimise injustice in terms of racial identities.

## Conclusion

This chapter has analysed teachers' perceptions of policy and media and how these seem to shape their perceptions of racial identities as well as how those constructions shape their educational practices. The analysis is achieved by combining CRT, postcolonialism and importantly whiteness as conceptual tools to understand power relations that appear to occur in the process of constructing teachers' perceptions of educational practice and race. By analysing teachers' views of policies and media in relation to educational practices (what I have called a multi-level approach of educational practices), in this chapter I have argued that the teachers' work needs to be considered in relation to the power relations that govern ways to perceive social reality. The analysis foregrounds racial structures that appear to affect teachers, while teachers do not seem to recognise these as dominant discourses of race. In this context, the data presented in this chapter suggests that these discourses work through policies and media to elevate whiteness in teachers' educational practices unconsciously. Thus, I argue, this unawareness is likely to lead teachers to reproduce discriminatory practices with students and to contribute to developing educational practices without sufficient reflection.

The data suggests that not only because of discourses but also because of mechanisms of policy making and delivery, teachers usually assume policy as "what they have to do" because, as explained by Hector, "*this is what [they] are paid for*". From this view, teachers are unaware of white supremacy and consequently racial structures tend to reproduce in teachers' practice. One of the ways this happens is through policy compliance with its attending statements of truthfulness. Although teachers do not accept the policies as out of bias completely, the top-down nature of policy implementation seems to lead some of them not only to try to comply but also to defend such policies. By doing this, teachers display 'white' supremacy as they believe that policies should be accepted and be applied without amendments or criticism.

There are other cases in which white supremacy operates and this is because teachers appear to be in racial dysconsciousness. This dysconsciousness has to do with the lack of understanding of how race and class have been constructed in intersection as well as of how there are also dominant racial discourses in the media. Teachers' testimonies suggest indirectly that they perceive whiteness in written and spoken discourses that circulate in the media however, they do not seem to perceive these as racial dominant discourses. By making explicit that media is a strong source of knowledge for society's perceptions of racial identity, this lack of awareness of race dominant discourses prevents them from developing critical reflections on these issues. In this vein, teachers' ideas show that whiteness seems to be an overarching force that can produce only a partial understanding of reality.

Finally, the data also suggests that teachers tend to endorse discourses of race present in policies with the intention to become less discriminatory. Nonetheless, they unwittingly rely on the homogenising approaches to pluri-culturality that, as discussed, are far from preventing racism in education. In fact, policies of ethno-education and inclusion in practice, as referenced by teachers, seem to be implemented without enough sensitisation. In this scenario, it can be said that in educational practices, whiteness-centred discourses operate not only at a political (policies) but also at a symbolic (visual imagery) level. As shown, these discourses are thus likely to shape teachers' perceptions of race and educational practice. In the next chapter, I will more specifically examine how these same factors contribute to configuring racial identities in teachers' perceptions of educational practices (the micro-level of educational practices).

## CHAPTER 6

# PERCEPTIONS OF RACIAL IDENTITIES IN TEACHERS' EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

### Introduction

In the previous chapter the analysis of teachers' perceptions in relation to policy and media indicated that power relations involved in these (policy and media) play a crucial role in constructing discourses of racial identities in educational practices. It also suggested that although there have been policies of recognition of pluri-culturality and 'racial' minorities these do not appear to have been enough to prevent racial discrimination. Some research has focused on discrimination represented in micro-aggressions that are accepted and not identified (e.g. Rollock et al., 2015). In the context of this study, these situations also seem to take part of social interactions. However, in this research, there is a major emphasis on the indifference to and forgetfulness of how racial structures burden some groups or individuals in the Colombian society. I argue that three main factors have played a major role: i) whiteness-centred discourses, which are frequently endorsed in policy making and media, and which teachers perceive but do not understand as racial structures; ii) the mechanisms that support policy translation seem to be unsuccessful (e.g. policies are imposed without space for critical reflection and teachers are not sensitise towards the topic of race); and iii) teachers seem to approach media content without awareness of its inherent racial bias.

These factors shape ideas of education and in turn reproduce fixed racial identities which are likely to be replicated by teachers in the classroom. As teachers perceive those identities as fixed and natural, they tend not to feel any need to challenge such constructions. The way those racial identities take shape in teachers' educational practice is the emphasis of this chapter.

In this chapter I argue that the teachers in this study seem to unconsciously essentialise and *otherise* minorities, thereby producing discriminatory practices towards those groups and pupils. These discriminatory practices are derived firstly from the social structures that rely on a racist system and secondly from the essentialisation and

objectivation of identities that circulate in discourses of policies and media. These discourses also produce and reproduce social and racial structures. To start the discussion of these issues, I first show how teachers' self-racial identification showed aspects of white privilege. I will later explain how that notion of white privilege has also implied essentialisation of other identities that have been *othered* in features of territorialisation, undermining exoticism and race silence. I will end the chapter by including a final reference to how teachers believe they resist discriminatory practices by emphasising national identity. In doing so, I will also discuss how teachers inadvertently seem to be sustaining racist discourses through the entanglement of neoliberal elements in their ideas and practice.

### **White privilege in mestizo identities**

The focus of this section explores how aspects of white privilege underlie teachers' perceptions of race. I will refer to three different ways in which this is interpreted from the data. The first has to do with the racialisation of others despite the denial of race as a category. The second relates to how teachers' racial identifications are interwoven with ideas of progress, civilisation and development. Following on from this, the third way is the apparent position of privilege teachers seems to take when describing 'others' (in the case and mainly indigenous and Afrodescendants). Before I start, it is necessary to highlight that, as discussed in chapter 3, the concept of mestizo shares features with the concept of white identity. White privilege is a concept that has been developed theoretically from whiteness studies to relate the high status that white identities have in relation to other 'racial' groups. By using the concept in this context, I am not considering mestizos as white. Far from that, I am using this theoretical concept to explain how the same features of privilege are experienced by the perceived mestizo in relation to other 'racial groups' in the context of this study.

The first part of the discussion of white privilege is the conflict that addresses the view of denial of race, and the ways racial categorisations are used to refer exclusively to others. This was a frequent characteristic of teachers' discourse in this study. For instance, Hector strongly denies race as a social category.

***Hector:** Here, I tell you that I do not classify myself as anything. I cannot say in what way I am racially; I am white or black or indigenous. Because from my view, I am a human being. Period! I maybe go to Africa and I get a tan, so I*

*could be black. Or if I stay in el Cauca and get pale and a bit tanned, then, I am indigenous, no. That is a great lie! For me, the idea of race does not exist. It is better that everybody lives and lives together and changes depending on their context.*

As seen, Hector strongly disagrees with the category of race to classify a human being and he relates to skin colour mainly to justify how he considers the idea as something false. So, his consideration could be situated in a more humanistic perspective that considers all human beings without distinction. In this case, it would be possible to assert that, since there is no race classification, he considers his position in a neutral perspective. However, [considering the criticism made by critical race theorists in terms of neutrality as non-existent \(Leonardo & Norton, 2014\), it can be argued that the participants' position leads to whiteness-centeredness](#). This position in his general discourse reveals that this neutrality is not the participants' case. The following is one of the many statements in which he refers to the category of indigenous people as a group that has been historically affected:

***Hector:** what I have discussed a lot is...about indigenous [people]. Because in that, that is ignorance about indigenous [people]. And that is an expression that even comes from the Spanish colony. Where the indigenous person was the bad one because he was the one attacking them, the one who looted because he his lands had been stolen. At the beginning of that expression, I remember that historically that was used to see the indigenous peoples' fierceness but with the time it was used to discriminate against indigenous [people]. So, [they were] bad and [they were] less than us. It was used to say that [they were] poor. The worst that has ever existed.*

Even though the position of this teacher was in absolute defence of the indigenous groups, the fact of keeping the racialised category for others while it is not accepted for oneself is an issue that has been criticised as white privilege (Clarke & Garner, 2009; Sleeter, 2004). In this sense, white privilege plays an important role in the construction of teachers' self-racial identification. White privilege was displayed in teachers' perceptions throughout their interviews at different moments. Even though it was not determined as a stable phenomenon, the analysis made suggest that white privilege in the teachers shares common features with other studies that have been made to understand white identities (Clarke & Garner, 2009; Ladson-Billings & Gillborn, 2004). Recalling Ladson-Billings and Tate (2006), white privilege is the right to have power

and privilege that others do not have as a result of racial divisions. In agreement with what the examples provided above show, some teachers made explicit that they enjoy the right not to be racialised. From their view, race or ethnicity is an aspect that mainly characterises either indigenous communities or Afro-Colombian communities in Colombia, and from that perspective, these groups are the only ones who suffer the yoke of prejudice and stereotypes<sup>25</sup>. Therefore, since they do not consider themselves part of these minorities, we can assume that teachers in this study enjoy privilege. As race works in intersection with class in the context of Colombia, white privilege comes to have socio-cultural as well as economic features (e.g. a different race status as well as class differentiation).

The second aspect that was detected as white privilege in teachers' perspectives is the connection that is made between whiteness, progress and civilisation which establishes an internal opposition with inferiority (Castro-Gomez, 2000; Leonardo, 2002). A good example of this is found in Antony's words when I asked him to classify himself racially or ethnically:

**Antony:** *I do not feel I am included in any group. I consider myself as a Bogotan, I do not belong to any Indigenous community or to Afro-descendants. I consider myself too as a city man (citadino). In any way, to live in Bogota is a different story from living in other parts of the country. Bogota is a metropolis; it has advanced more. Maybe in this concept of citizenship.*

**Researcher:** *Which one?*

**Antony:** *The concept of neoliberal citizenship. Buildings, money, transport and work. So, definitely Bogota is another story compared with other Colombian cities or other little cities that we call towns. In that way, I consider myself very much a city person.*

In addition to presenting white privilege as deracialised or different from any ethnic groups, Antony shows how he associates his identity in whiteness relating to the construction inherited from colonialism, as represented in wealth, privilege and beauty (Telles & Flores, 2013). Working as 'epistemic violence' (ideas anchored in knowledge that help to construct the worldview (Castro-Gómez, 2005b)), these ideas make Antony imply that the opposite of metropolis is ethnicity. Following this logic, then ethnicity is

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<sup>25</sup> This has also been reinforced by the policy documents in which racial categories are separated between Ethnicities (Afro-Colombians, Roma, etc) and without ethnic origin (mestizos) (DANE, 2005).

associated with barbarism. This is also underscored when he compares indigenous and Afro-descendants at odds with the life of the city. Since he explains progress and advance in relation to the city, where he belongs, he considers he is not part of the problem that minorities suffer. Thus, he has privilege. Clarke and Garner (2009) made this same point by citing [Anne Phoenix \(1996\)](#), a researcher who developed interviews with white young people in which she found that they enjoyed white privilege because in her study, she showed that white people did not have to think in terms of a racialised and marginalised identity. Therefore, they could idealise equality. In this way, they could focus on personal effort to reach goals. This was like what was visible in Antony's view. Moreover, in Antony's definition of citizen, he denotes a conception of urbanism that is equated with advance, something that he later referred to as the standard norm. [In this sense, his position seems to unintentionally exclude and reproduce racist structures that classify people by difference depending on their state of advancement, while that progress is directly related to the power of material acquisition as postcolonialists \(e.g. Mignolo, 2005\) and critical race theorists \(e.g. Leonardo & Norton, 2014; Walton et al., 2018\) would argue.](#) From this view, people of colour are the ones outside the city and white privilege is enjoyed by people from the city. In this view, the idea of race is taken beyond the boundaries of skin colours and assigned new interpretations associated with a territorialisation of race.

The third point associated with white privilege was seen in teachers' explanations as they established a system of hierarchisation in which mestizo seemed to be superior while others were less or in dependence on mestizo. In this context and following Wade (1995), as evident in Omar's excerpt below, some teachers see race mixing as a process of 'whitening' that serves to be a source of privilege. In this case, regardless of the category teachers used as part of their racial descriptions (mestizo, multicultural or creole), minorities seem to be undermined. By the same token, when teachers were asked about Colombian identity, they usually thought of it in a contemporary homogenised identity that subsumed the classical racial identities such as black or indigenous and ignored the baggage of disadvantage these groups have endured. In the same line of thought, teachers' descriptions of those minority groups are considered in difference which they perceive as natural, but which is in fact culturally essentialised (Weedon, 2004). The concept of white privilege helps to clarify how there is difference in the experience lived by privileged groups in relation to marginalised ones (Clarke & Garner, 2009). In this case, in the view of teachers, mestizo is privileged in relation to

other Colombian minorities. The following extract is a good illustration of all this discussion:

**Researcher: how would you characterise those groups [indigenous groups]?**

**Omar:** *Many of the indigenous have been transformed into those that we believe, hmm that they have become citizens able to be in the city. Or that they can inhabit a territory which is different from the indigenous one. But already in the city, there are many indigenous people that are commonly there because before they occupied territories that were only for indigenous people. But the violence situation that is lived in Colombia has made those groups disappear or intermix much more (entremezclar) with the inhabitants that have come, let's say, from different origins.*

**Researcher: and the others?**

**Omar:** *Well, it is supposed that this mestizo group is the one that commands the territory but...that is something that...well I don't know. They are the ones who command, for the white law, let's say or that (\*). But...*

**Researcher: what do you mean?**

**Omar:** *They are the ones who establish the different laws to rule the country.*

Omar relates to two different aspects; firstly, indigenous people are required to be transformed into mestizo to be able to improve, to be able to live in the city. And secondly, mestizos have the authority to rule and command the whole country. This happens without consciousness that exclusion for indigenous people is assumed as normal. In relation to the first aspect, it is evident that white privilege underpins Omar's views when he considers that indigenous people living in the city necessarily have to go through a process of adaptation that allows them to "*become citizens*". It can be inferred then that in his view, indigenosity is associated with backwardness and primitivism. Additionally, they naturally belong to a specific place which is not the city. As claimed by postcolonialists as well as CRT, these are discourses that perpetuate difference as a problem and deepen that understanding rooted in parameters of inferiority and superiority. Furthermore, referring now to the second aspect, he also considers that the fact that indigenous people do not have political participation in the legal frame of the country is normal. This way of understanding the organisation of society reflects the unconscious perpetuation of inequality that places some groups as unprivileged, marginalised and without voice. Condition that Spivak (1988) has defined



as subaltern. Paradoxically, while these groups are seen in these terms, others keep being part of privilege. In the eyes of CDA, this suggests that individuals pretend to be rational and authors of meaning when, on the contrary, they are individuals constituted in language and ideology (Weedon, 2004). As shall be seen in the next section, these same factors of privilege lead teachers to essentialise others' 'racial' identities and consequently reinforce racial structures.

### **Essentialisation of identities: an issue of epistemic violence, national identity and othering**

The discussion that I am going to develop in this section relates to three aspects that I have already dealt with in chapter 5: as evident in teachers' perceptions, i) white supremacy governs policy making and delivery; ii) the media reinforces whiteness-centred discourses which are not clearly perceived as racial structures and iii) policies of ethnicisation and ethno-education have not appeared to properly support the recognition of groups that have been racially discriminated. Following on from these observations, it shall be argued that, unsurprisingly, teachers end up reproducing structures through essentialising identities by making generalisations about themselves and different groups, defining their identities as fixed and unchangeable and taking them as natural. This is a discussion that from the view of postcolonialists such as Castro-Gomez (2000) engrains epistemic violence because it does not acknowledge the flexible changing nature of identities and the individual experience that can add particular features to subjects.

To develop this analysis, I will first refer to how discourses of sameness are based on essentialisations. Here, I will discuss how, at different levels, teachers tended to evoke unified identitarian images of a national identity in relation to cultural features such as food, affectivity, religion and geography. [This can be problematic since these features are seen as romanticised images of national identity that focus on cultural products which do not consider the conflictive area of race \(Walton et al., 2018\). In this study, it appears that this conflictive area is hidden through images of whiteness that are rooted in the Spanish heritage that have been hybridised in the modern view of Colombian identity.](#) On the other hand, these same factors seem to be the lens through which they see minority groups, such as Afro-Colombians and indigenous, as different. In this line of thought, it will be shown how territoriality, in particular, appears to play a prominent

role in constructing essentialising images of these groups. In this context, I go on to show that the images of sameness teachers construct come to reproduce old exclusionary systems as they reinforce othering attitudes. Some of these attitudes are othering **undermining, othering exoticising and silencing race**.

### **Sameness: essentialisation of cultural identity**

When describing identity(ies) in Colombia, teachers tend largely to do so in terms of sameness which take cultural features as its basis. This was done, for instance, by providing an overload of cultural descriptions to refer to a national identity. As will be argued, these descriptions suggest that there is an essentialised view of identities in the notion of culture. This view reinforces stereotypes and makes identity(ies) appear to be static and fixed. This essentialisation is problematic because it recreates racial structures based on ideas of culture. The following is an example of the way in which teachers reflected the cultural emphasis to describe a Colombian national identity, in this case:

*Gina: ...and the food. Through food we construct relationships, affectivity, and respect. The dinner for 'the candle day' (el día de las velitas), the dinner for the people we are going to meet, a barbecue. Our celebrations are all food celebrations. Food is a key thing with Colombian people.*

After asking teachers how they described the Colombian identity, Gina's is an example of the prototypical answer. The description of Colombian identity based on cultural features was common among teachers. Teachers **emphasised superficial views of culture based on traditions and practices that were disconnected from social structures**.

**Therefore, these discourses reattach to stereotypical forms and activities (Walton et al., 2018). Features such as skin colour, language and cultural practices are qualified as markers of a genuine and 'authentic' Colombian identity. It is singularised rather than acknowledged in multiples layers of being Colombian.** Following the theoretical underpinnings of this study, it would be contradictory to understand a national identity that focuses on cultural characteristics mainly without referring to aspects of inclusion, exclusion or historical disadvantage. The contradiction would meet the issue of taking the view of intercultural relations that CRTs such as Ladson-Billings & Gillborn (2004) or Leonardo (2002) have criticised because of their attempt to blur the racial structures that contribute to the legitimisation of injustice. At the level of identities, lay discourses on homogenised cultural identities seem to provide new alternatives to forgetting discriminatory practices. Nevertheless, it also produces new racist discriminatory

structures based on cultural differentiations made about nationality (R. Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Rattansi, 2007). In the words of Walton et al. (2018), this is an implicit rationale to produce faithful subjects in relation to national identity. On the other hand, those discourses of cultural identity seem to be ascribed in power relations, anchored in knowledge that postcolonial studies have already criticised such as the ones related to the ‘develop’ and ‘underdeveloped countries’ (Escobar, 2005) or the east and the west (Said, 1976). In this context, although teachers show in other situations that they are aware of the racial conflict, the commonality of their answers in referring to Colombian identity detached from racial description and based on cultural features only suggests racial dysconsciousness and misbalanced relations. From the perspective of CRT and postcolonialists, this situation reproduces stereotypes that are new cultural racisms and perpetuates colonial domination. These cultural racisms, thus, reproduce and feed unfair structures. For example, in the geographical racial links Molly, another participant, explains that “*Colombian beaches are the best*” without having enough experience of other beaches in which she can establish a difference (see section on sameness, territoriality in the next subsection). Therefore, she creates boundaries between her perception of Colombia as a territory and the ones of other countries.

Additionally, these cultural features are extremely related to the colonial imposition which the teachers generally accepted uncritically. These features are adopted as part of teachers’ identification. For example, as can be seen in Gina’s excerpt, those cultural features are connected with affectivity. Postcolonialists criticise the fact that affectivity has been a discourse installed in non-western societies to contrast them with the intellectual superiority of the west (Hall, 1990). This was another significant factor that was frequently brought up by teachers in their descriptions of Colombian identity. In her description, Gina particularly links the idea of food with “*constructing relationships, affectivity and respect*”. These ideas are, in her view, constituent of a Colombian national identity. Therefore, it can be argued that Gina’s ideas show how Colombian identity as cultural identity coincides with what Weedon (2004) has referred to as the articulation of identities going beyond rationality. Weedon argues that dominant discourses have historically operated in the colonised people to relate them more with emotions and subconscious dimensions of the individual. As seen in this case, Gina with her reference to affectivity is aligning herself with the position of the colonised for her own understanding of Colombian identity. In terms of Weedon (2004), dominant discourses have located colonised people in difference where the non-white is emotional whereas the white is seen as rational. Both notions legitimise hierarchies of

white superiority. Following these ideas and in consonance with the notion of epistemic violence, teachers' view of cultural identity highlighting affectivity seems to be motivated by essentialising cultural features mainly imposed from colonialism.

In the same vein, data suggested that teachers preserve the old narratives or religion that maintain their forms of knowledge in whiteness-centred perspectives. Religion is another factor reflected in the data apparently derived from the essentialisation of cultural features in national identity which keep subjects in the 'correct' behaviour of society. However, the institutional racism implemented since times of colonisation imposed the religion to the population in the Colombian territory and today it forms of an unquestioned knowledge that forms part of Colombian identity. By this token, religion was introduced by teachers as part of their identification with sameness in Colombian identity. Different from the other cultural aspects that were a salient part of their answers on how they define a Colombian identity, religion emerged in teachers' discourses unconsciously accompanying other sort of responses. The following example is representative;

***Molly:** But I do with others, the same way that God does with me. Because for me God is an important part of my life. The religion part is...well, God gives you infinite love, God gives you mercy. God gives you affection the way you are and how you are. So, I have to do the same with the other, in the same way. Without pointing and judging because, first I am nobody to do it, neither to reject and so on.*

In this case Molly, explicitly names God several times in order to validate her statements about how she relates to others without discrimination. Similar to her case, other teachers unconsciously essentialise religion as part of Colombian identity. I argue that this continuous reference to God in their discourse shows how religion is a value that underlies their social practices. It is something that has become part of their cultural identification and has also been taken for granted. Faith in God in this case seems to be analogous to Catholicism in Colombia as has already been confirmed in previous studies (Beltrán Cely, 2013). Following Beltrán Cely (2013), it can be claimed that while teachers see that it is necessary to back up their comments in relation to their moral values under the frame of faith (Catholic religion), they instinctively support the epistemic violence of colonisation that has continued to involuntarily make Colombian identity dependent on 'the west.' As Spivak (1988) and Said (1976) suggest, this is precisely a way in which colonialism persists. Bearing in mind that Christianity was

imposed on the indigenous people in the colony and was used to succumb indigenous people to comprehend the world based on white moral values, it is a strong component of racial domination. This is the same domination in which indigenous people were forced to understand the world in the parameters constructed by colonisers. This is probably better explained by one of the participants who shows awareness of this:

*Luisc: ...And it was funny. I was talking with the pupils. How before the [National]constitution 1991, the constitution of 1886 in Rionegro. They say that indigenous cultures and indigenous rituals were something that they used to get drugs. That it was a poison, that they were possessed by a demon. Why? Because the formal language was Spanish and the religion was Catholic. So, everything that was out of that parameter was...well. Subliminal, atheist, well. Even in some history books that I have read, they talk about that. About the drug consumption that indigenous people had in their rituals. But you start seeing the readings that are provided and yes, and we had that constitution for more than a century from 1886 until 1991*

The dominant discourses of colonisation that Luisc described, as he said, lasted for more than a century officially in the constitution of Colombia as a republic. As a consequence, those discourses placed non-whites (indigenous, Afrodescendents, mixed Colombians in general) in an inferior position and marked asymmetrical relations among 'races' in Colombian society. In reference to this we can say that when religious principles shape the perceptions of Colombians' identity, the recognition of those different faiths is not evident in practice. By referring to the concept of 'white' privilege in mestizo, those groups that are seen as different, such as indigenous and Afro-Colombian people become part of the others in reference to majority in Colombia in terms of religion too. Recalling catholic religion as a white practice, which is also imbued in the mestizo identity, this has been seen as a factor that separates whatever is out of the scope of catholic beliefs. This connects with the general idea that I will discuss below: how the cultural essentialisation of Colombian identity has also been made in relation to minority groups. Cultural essentialisation has been made not only in relation to national identity in Colombia, it has also been seen as a defining factor to describe ethnicities (see previous chapter on dysconsciousness in policy contributing to racial discrimination for an example of this). Cultural essentialisation made towards other groups that are part of the Colombian identity has caused 'othering', an aspect that

I will discuss later. For now, I will show how territoriality plays a crucial role in this construction of cultural essentialised images of groups in Colombia.

### **Sameness: Territoriality**

In my analysis, teachers' discourses show essentialisation of Colombian identity(ies) in features that characterise them mainly by establishing boundaries between 'them' and 'us'. This characterisation of groups in sameness comes to be crucial for the groups' definition and their establishment of a sense of belonging (Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Woodward, 1997). While sameness is an important element to describe identities, it is, at the same time, a problematic assumption that identities are static and fixed (Knowles & Alexander, 2005; Mirza, 1997; Weedon, 2004). Sameness gives importance to the political representation of groups but it also diminishes the value of individual experience. This fixation of individual identity that does not recognise different experiences derived from other structures such as class or gender was the resource that teachers used to describe Colombian identity(ies) as a syncretic mass (as a compact device). In turn, this characterisation presented groups as monocultural while they generally ignored power relations and hegemony generating inclusionary and exclusionary systems (Woodward, 1997). As can be inferred from Hector's views of the Colombian identity, an interesting way in which this essentialisation became apparent is in the denial of the existence of such identity:

***Hector:** that is a very complex thing. Because after you have been in several regions, to identify a Colombian person, a COLOMBIAN Colombian. Difficult... Unfortunately, the Colombian person as we used to say, ah the Colombian person who we used to say about 50 years ago, the Colombian person is difficult to identify. If you go to the regions of Cauca and see the people..., they look more Ecuadorian. I swear it! But if you go to Boyacá, in the centre of the country, and even the people in Los Llanos, these people believe they are Venezuelan and, in Boyacá they believe they are Mexican, believe it or not. In that place, they believe they are Mexican. You see them in the same way. With the boots, the hat and the way they talk, the music. The norteño music that spread all across that part. So, you don't know what Colombian is and what it is not. I identify the Colombian native with the native. I mean, the elder person is the one who can show us how the Colombian person is. Otherwise it is difficult... I would say, the Colombian person does not have any identity.*

*Currently. At this moment, in 2015. You cannot identify a Colombian person. It is difficult.*

As seen in Hector's interview, he considers Colombian identity as better identified with inexistence and emptiness. In his view, to be able to talk about an identity, it is necessary to have clear parameters that permit someone to describe what that identity is. In his view, identities are also tied to territory and this is a feature that defines the consistency of identity components. As his description appears to break the rules of his idealised essential identity, he firmly concludes that there is a lack of identity. His view also makes evident that identity for him is essentialised in a static society that relates specific features that pervade over time. This is a telling case that provides an interesting point of contrast with other cases of essentialisation of Colombian identity in the data.

Other teachers also explicitly essentialise features of Colombian identity in relation to territoriality:

***Researcher: Teacher, from your point of view, how do you identify a Colombian person?***

***Molly: Somebody who loves his country, who has a citizen culture. People who defend their principles, values, roots. People who get interested in knowing what is in here. There are people who say, "oh no, I go to London, I go to somewhere else", and you ask them what they know about Colombia and they do not know anything about here. So, I think there should be a person who gets interested in knowing here, knowing his/her country. People who are interested in travelling here. To support it, to do things for his/her country.***

***Molly: Look, I have had the chance to [visit], several countries. And Colombia has the best, the best landscapes of the world. I travelled this year, very excited, to the Bahamas. Everybody talked to me about the Bahamas. They said it was paradise. But I said: San Andres is better than Bahamas! My beaches are more beautiful.***

It is clear that Molly constructs Colombian sameness in relation to territory. This feature of identity was characterised abundantly by participants and it consisted of continuous flattery towards the geography characterising the country. Identity is then attached to the links people have with the space that they inhabit. At the same time, this sense of belonging had to do with the need to be connected with the land. This is an example of

identity understood as territoriality (Koopman, 2012). This is a form of associating people with territories that attributes physical and behavioural characteristics in an essentialised understanding. That is, fixed identities that concretise the abstract boundaries of 'race' (or national identity) on a space. [On the other hand, this aligns with instances of despise for difference on the grounds of faithfulness to a national identity \(Walton et al., 2018\).](#) The description made by Molly in terms of territoriality and its relation to people's fixation resonates with instances where teachers talked about perceptions of indigenous and Afro-descendants. As illustrated in Antony's views, these groups tend to be defined by sameness as monocultural and by descriptions that link them to the territory they occupy:

*Antony: The Afro descendant community lives on the coast. They are on the side of the coast. And in Bogota, we receive people from all parts of the country. Well, because of the violence problems and all the internal armed conflict. Then, you see the majority of what we call costeños [term to distinguish people who live on the coasts], that are the ones that we call Afro descendant community. They live in the skirts of Bogota in the stratum 1 [the lowest socioeconomic status].*

Despite territoriality being the same feature in the two cases to describe different types of identities (Colombian, indigenous, Afro-descendent), such territoriality is defined differently depending on the specific group being referred to. In contrast with the Colombian identity, in Antony's view for instance, representation of indigenous and Afro-descendants come with connotations of poverty, deprivation and stigma. This can be inferred in the way he refers to Bogota as the place that receives people from all over the country, and even though he is conscious of some of the social problems that oblige these populations to migrate, he associates them as naturally coming to occupy the most deprived areas of the city. This resonates with Koopman (2012) when she argues that spaces in Colombia are not only racialised but also there are racialised spaces.

Following Koopman and considering the previous excerpt, it can be inferred that some spaces are associated with stigma and racial stereotyping and that, in turn, these places unconsciously become essentialised in the perception of the outsiders. [These descriptions omit the fact that identities are flexible and that they depend on multiple contextual and situational factors that surround individuals \(Walton et al., 2018\).](#) This would explain why perceptions of indigenous and Afro-Colombians take for granted poverty and misery on these groups. [According to Walton et al. \(2018\), the result of](#)



these essentialised notions of identity end up in perpetuating disadvantage for the ones that do not appear to fit ‘the norm’. Kozol (1991, in Leonardo & Norton, 2014), explains how territorialisation consequently creates ideas in education of ‘deserved and non-deserved’ schools and students. This will later be discussed in relation to the effects of educational practice.

In order to follow the line of this discussion I will now turn to address other aspects that configure perceived racial identities in Colombia as essentialised. The first one has to do with othering (making the other one different in various features), in opposition to sameness (relate as homogeneous and fixed) and the second to silencing race. Both concepts are closely related to the earlier discussion on institutional racism based on white privilege at the beginning of this chapter.

### **Othering, undermined**

Othering is defined here as the action (physical or mental) that demarcates difference between individuals or groups. Rollock, Gillborn, Vincent, and Ball (2015) explain this as ‘the one who does not fit’ idea based on stereotypes that threaten people’s ambitions. This definition is taken from the perspective of otherness that has been developed in postcolonial studies (Hall, 1990; Said, 1976; Spivak, 1988). From this view, this concept has been described as the way the west has dominated knowledge to produce regimes of truth in which white appears superior and, thus, the non-white as necessarily in a hierarchical relation to white. This concept is also related to epistemic violence and whiteness discussed in chapter 3 which beyond difference involves aspects of dehumanisation and loss of dignity. As suggested before, teachers appear to see Colombian identity in terms of sameness while they also see Afro-Colombian and indigenous groups in terms of difference; in other words, as others. This dichotomy seems to be built on the hierarchical organisation of the colonial gaze. In this context, *othering* in teachers appears to take place in a variety of forms, in the way they describe that difference which in turn reinforces racial structures. Some of these forms identified in the data, as discussed earlier, are the establishment of cultural boundaries, the reinforcement of predetermined behaviours and the territorialisation of race. As shall be seen in this section, teachers showed *othering* was also part of their conceptualisation to differentiate regional groups (e.g. costeños, rolos, etc) as well as Afro-Colombians, and indigenous people.

In the case of indigenous people, othering is a symbolic victimisation that is legitimised. That is, it is well known and accepted. In the case of Afro-Colombians, othering is shown as undermining whilst it is also being not recognised as that. With regards to the case of indigenous people, references to the lack of attention, the feeling of sorrow caused by the deprivation of their lands and the superficial view that teachers tended to have about indigenous communities conform to those illustrations of othering that reinforce racial structures. A case in point is found in Antony's view when he described indigenous pupils that come to his school:

*Antony: ... when I spoke to indigenous children, many of them come even from Ecuador with their customs, one can identify them rapidly because they have very long straight hair and their skin is brown and they still have their traditions. Sometimes they don't go to school for one or two weeks because they have to go to their celebrations in Ecuador. They are also from Pasto. From that part of the country. That is in the school where I work. They are there because of the commercial activity. They sell products like sweaters and woollen hats.*

In this case, the teacher shows othering as a fixed perception of the identity of indigenous people that “highlight(s) difference and non-belonging” (Rollock, Gillborn, Vincent, & Ball, 2015, p. 938). This special case of othering has various characteristics. Firstly, it relies on physical traits to identify an indigenous person. Second, an indigenous person is fixed in an identity that seems to be crystallised from the time of colonisation. In this respect, the anchored identity of an imaginary community affects the teacher's perception, leading him to recognise an indigenous person only if they embody these specific characteristics. This othering presented by Antony is also ascribed to the colonial gaze not only in the way he describes the groups' physical appearance but also in how he makes a direct relation with handicraft activities (e.g. knitting). This othering fosters an unconscious delimitation that prevents Antony from perceiving <sup>26</sup>‘indigenous people’ in different activities. In other words, his position shows a partial understanding in recognising the background that has positioned indigenous people in the core of those activities. At the same time, it builds boundaries for indigenous identities to move beyond this prescriptive racist paradigm established in the colony.

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<sup>26</sup> Quotations are used to emphasised that identities are perceived rather than natural.

From the lens of CRT, this essentialisation of indigenous identities undermines these groups as human beings and locates them in disadvantage. Even if there are policies of recognition, this shows how social structures continue to reproduce inequality. The lack of attention to these populations is caused by structural racism that positions them as victims but nothing is done to provoke real change. The unawareness of injustice that these populations have to face, in conjunction with seeing the problem as an inevitable situation is a manifestation of othering by means of victimisation (i.e. referring to them mainly in terms of disadvantage). As was also clear in the case of Irene, reported before (see section on dysconsciousness of policy contributing to racial inequality), attitudes of disdain and sorrow towards indigenous communities seem to fixate their identities in the same negative terms. The fact that Irene does not include herself as part of the ‘naturally occurring problem’ shows *othering* that is a reinforcement of the structural racism that seems to exist in the context of Colombia. Racism is a common practice derived from colonisation, which as this study suggests seems to now fuel the belief that it is ‘normal’ for indigenous (and other) groups to be in disadvantage. This is what Weedon (2004) calls passive discrimination and what I call *undermined othering*. I made the distinction to emphasise that this type of discrimination is seen in relation to Colombian identity in sameness with contradictory features in contrast with those of a national identity.

Undermined othering also happens at a different level with perceived Afro-Colombian groups. As discussed in chapter 2, in Colombia the notion of race associated with black skin colour has come to be a taboo but this fact has not prevented racism whatsoever. Far from that, as is indicative in the data, it has simply made it more hidden. Some interpretive repertoires are framed in stereotypes derived from the institutional racism. In the following excerpt, for instance, we can see how Marioc uses what Van Dijk (1992) calls discursive disclaimers that, although aimed to distance him from racist discourses, end up configuring new ways of these discourses. As seen in the example, the disclaimers Marioc uses include presenting black people (costeños) as different, hyperbolising optimistic images of this group (i.e. some members as successful) that stress their preference for activities that do not require intellectual effort in relation to other activities that would entail it (e.g. being a singer vs being a doctor) (c.f. Louis, 2005).

***Marioc:** I believe we are all the same. For example, the coast man [referring to the regionalised Afro Colombian]. In my younger days, they were recognised as*

*being lazy. And at [name of a university] there were a lot of them... you know people with not a very good reputation (laughter). But there were also some good ones.*

**Researcher: and, nowadays?**

*Marioc: Oh. Of course, there is still a lot of that. This is something very curious. That there are singers... (\*) hmm yes, singers that... (\*) For example, Peter Manjarres. I think he is a doctor. Other singers are lawyers, others are doctors. Gabriel Morales was another singer that was studying medicine and he died. But (\*) So, (\*) this means, today many people are making efforts to study. And this tendency is strong. From parents to children.*

**Researcher: and, these singers you mention, are ...?**

*Marioc: COSTEÑOS!"*

Marioc decided to use examples of Afro-Colombian people who have overcome stereotypes. Hence, for him, racial identity is a matter of overcoming a *bad reputation* and this is suggested when he says that “*today many people [in this case Afro-Colombians] are making efforts to study*” in contrast to what used to happen before. This suggests that Afro-Colombians should not be discriminated because they can improve and change. Some of the examples of these changes are presented by Marioc as the desire to develop a professional career. However, in his perception, Afro-Colombians also seem to prefer artistic activities such as singing. As seen, this essentialisation involves those barriers of difference, regarding not only skin colour, but also the preferences that someone with a specific skin colour might have in opposition to those preferences of people embodying white skin colour. An explanation of why this happens can be found in postcolonial studies where it is argued that the world is seen in association with west/intellectual, compared to orient/emotional and irrational (Said, 1976). These “oppressive social relations can be maintained with an illusion of solidarity and can operate through the mystifying premise that society is working for the benefit of all” (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 85) but continue reinforcing racial structures.

In the description of Colombian identity, teachers suggest that Colombianity is seen as fixed sameness in aspects of mixture working together to build an image of a syncretic identity. However, this is not the case in the way they perceive groups which are seen as different. As these examples suggest, these perceptions locate the groups in

asymmetric relations. The inferior relationships established with some groups is symbolic as it is part of the people's imaginaries of those communities which come from essentialised identities that are fixed and unchangeable from the time of the colony. Hall (1990) refers to those imagined communities as those pieces of remembrance that we know about us but that have never been experienced. These remembrances are only known through representations which usually come from regimes of power from the colonial perspective. Therefore, this sort of essentialisation supports inequality and injustice. Furthermore, as discussed in the next section, undermining is not the only way in which essentialisation sustains an unfair system.

### **Othering, exoticised**

In addition to *undermined othering*, the data that suggests that there is another type of othering, which underscores some practices as exotic. This exoticisation, as criticised by whiteness theorists as well as postcolonialists make 'others' appear different in relation to the '(white) standard' (Bonnett, 2000; Castro-Gómez, 2005a). It follows that the identities associated with these exoticised practices are barred from being recognised in their own individuality. Othering in this sense is also seen as a negative attitude because it alienates identities and oppresses alternative parallel cultures that might have developed other ways of thinking and alternative worldviews (Spivak, 1988). In the case of this study, as shall be argued, this kind of othering happens especially in relation to indigenous groups.

Even if some of the teachers feel a type of affiliation to indigenous communities when they refer to them as "our ancestors", it seems that they have become for them an exotic tourist attraction. The exoticism with which they link these communities with the unknown and mystery is an opposition to a 'normal' pattern of life. This is following the line of normal life that has been created by the dominant discourses of representation (Hall, 1990; Said, 1976). The following is a clear example of how that happens:

***Molly:** Look, I went to La Guajira. I went to a Rancheria some years ago. I went to the Coast and I was there in a Rancheria. And their way to dress was to cover themselves all up. There were some girls who had their periods and they were in quarantine. They still use the quarantine. This thing of confining them.*

*In preparing to give them to a man who would pay for them. “El dote” is an amount of money that they have to pay to the family because they take their daughter to their families. They still have the traditions to keep women in quarantine during menstruation until they are purified because to have a period is to be impure. And all of these things are their things.*

As suggested, this teacher’s view about indigenous identity is strongly influenced by the experience she had in a racialised indigenous place in Colombia and where she considered they were clear examples of exotic behaviour. In this perspective, Hall (1990) asserts that exoticisation is another sort of othering that, thanks to colonisation, has interrupted the opportunity to understand other ways of life from another perspective. In fact, Vass (2002) asserts that whiteness is responsible for representing and objectivising indigenous people because they are known through that objectivation. As seen in this extract, this exoticisation is extremely connected with white privilege in which the colonial contemplation produces the effect of seeing the realities of ‘the other’ as exotic or weird. This is because they are seen in reference to whiteness. Otherness has been created as exotic to white supremacy and has fed a curiosity for the unknown (Hooks, 1992; Mirza, 1997). Despite this point, this kind of othering does not appear to be as harmful as the one explained before (undermined othering), Mirza (1997) suggests that this representation weakens agency and self-determination, converting subjects into passive victims waiting to be inscribed with meaning by those who stand using the white gaze. In this way, confirming that these forms of othering convert indigenous people, in this case, into objects rather than subjects of their own reality.

In light of the apparent white privilege immersed in teachers’ mestizo identity, indigenosity appears to be seen as fixed and immutable after colonisation as when Molly emphasises that they “*still use the quarantine*”. Indigenosity is also seen as weird and subsidiary of ‘white’.

Although **not** aware of the racist ideology, Molly in another part of the conversation explains herself how power relations give a shape to those discourses of othering. She explains that the indigenous people have been made into strangers because of homogenised images of beauty. Therefore, she describes white supremacy and its impact on how indigenous people of Colombia become “*strangers*”.

**Molly:** ... you go, for example, to the Santa Martha region, where the indigenous people are and they are like strangers, aren’t they? You see them

*like a ritual. One can see that as a ritual and you do not see it as part of the population. And that they are our ancestors.*

**Researcher: why do you think this happens?**

*Molly: Every time people, technology, mass media. The prototypes of models that are presented to us, they make us lose our identity and desire to be like the other. Lack of identity, lack of love for ourselves. And I also think that this is a lack of self-esteem. Some time ago, a beautiful woman was a Boyacense, with big cheeks (cachetona), blushing face (colorada), big eyes, beautiful black hair, nowadays, she has to be almost European. A prototype of a model that has been sold to us that is the model of the ideal woman. So, we have lost those values. We have lost those ideals.*

Molly also explains how she perceives that the influence of media contributes to reinforcing this form of othering. In consonance with the previous chapter, this excerpt shows that the media plays a strong role in regimes of truth that end up shaping people's perceptions of groups and communities, as well as how they contribute to build up concepts such as beauty based on the white standard.

Thus far, I have discussed three types of essentialisation that has to do with seeing racial identities in relation to territories, differentiation of identities in relation to a lower status and in relation to strangeness. The following section will discuss how silence around issues of race appears to contribute to these different types of essentialisation which also contribute to preserve racial structures.

### **Silencing race**

In the field of CDA, silence is actually a reflection of meaning that deserves to be analysed in order to understand a given phenomenon. Following Mazzei (2008), this is particularly useful to analyse race too. In agreement with this, in the analysis of teachers' interviews, silences about racial issues were identified as meaningful spaces that 'made race' (Knowles & Alexander, 2005), and in turn, produce racist practices. This section will focus on exploring this issue. Drawing on Mazzei (2008), I will discuss three different forms of silencing race identified in the data. The first refers to polite silencing which has to do with saying what is appropriate and comfortable to others. The second has to do with silencing due to privilege. This case usually happens when the one speaking has not experienced racial discrimination. The third case refers

to veiled silence which takes place when silence is used metaphorically to avoid the answer of a question.

The first case of race silencing identified in the data is found in instances where teachers showed high levels of caution when talking about specific groups. This was particularly found in the descriptions teachers made of Afro-Colombians. Avoidance of the word 'black' as a category to describe those groups or the use of alternative terminology (e.g. Afro-Colombians, Afro-descendants, people of colour), and changes in tone of voice, as well as feelings of discomfort when using the word, are manifestations of meaningful 'silence'. In this regard, it is important to highlight that, as happens almost everywhere, in Colombia the word black in reference to skin colour has gained a negative connotation, and thus alternative terms are preferred (e.g., blacky, brown skinned). This seemed to take part in the participants' attitudes. For example, in a moment of our conversation Molly used the phrase: "well, the black people, as you call them", when we were talking about racial groups of Colombia. With this sentence, she made explicit that she was not comfortable in using the word "black" and highlighting that the word was used by me instead of her was a relief. That was a common feeling among the teachers as we approached the topic of 'black' people or sometimes the general area of race. According to CRTs, avoidance occurs intentionally, and in turn, it makes racism more hidden because it does not challenge racist structures.

With regards to the second form of silencing race, it is probably useful to refer to what Wade (1995) calls 'whitening mestizo.' Wade explains that after independence 'mestizo' was an ideology that involved a process of improving race towards whiteness, which in turn made 'mestizos' take up the symbolic privilege of white, as discussed in the first section of this chapter. This privilege seems to underlie Antony's silence:

***Researcher: how do you describe yourself racially or ethnically?***

***Antony: can you give me an example?***

***Researcher: yes, some people say that there are indigenous, black people.***

***Antony: ah ok. Actually, I don't classify myself in a racial group.***

As we can see, Antony's silence was manifested in showing confusion towards my question about race. Perhaps it was uncomfortable for him. Recalling the ideas of white privilege in mestizo, Antony gains privilege by associating himself with the majority, with the standard. As his white privilege leads him to consider a person out of the racial conflict, in this case, he preferred to ask a follow up question to be sure of his answer.



This follow up question is indeed, a form of silence. A silence that is produced by the privilege that mestizo embodies and which excludes and invisibilises others. This invisibilisation is another form of silencing race, which, as discussed in whiteness studies, is a common practice unwittingly made by groups in privilege (McIntosh, 2004).

The third case of silencing race can be shown in the example given by Irene in the previous chapter which I recall below. In this case, when she was asked about her racial identity and she avoided her answer by attempting to answer a different one. In her case, her apparent privilege as a non-member of minority groups allowed her not to articulate her own identity. On the contrary, she identified herself in relation to the others, in this case, in relation to ethnicity:

**Researcher:** *If I ask you how you describe yourself racially, what would you say?*

**Irene:** *well, the first thing that should be considered is that race, is human race. I mean, our species is race. What we can talk about is ethnicities but these are oriented from the cultural point of view. But racially, that is a topic that has been instilled in us by our grandparents. And even from time immemorial, race has impacted several aspects of humanity but race, is human race. Ethnicity is what makes possible cultural differences and those cultures have to start a dialogue and there must be an agreement between them. In this way, there has to be respect for their traditions.*

The silences used by the participants make it plausible to argue that teachers tend to construct themselves in 'white' privilege while silencing race. In discussing these issues, Mazzei (2008) explains that unnamng 'race' or the efforts of avoiding racism are practices derived from whiteness racist discourses that, instead of transforming racial structures, trigger selective reference and talk. Thus, it could be argued that teachers' perceptions seem to reflect the racial structures to which they are exposed, consequently, they reproduce those structures.

Essentialisation in teachers' discourse is made by them in reference to minority groups mainly as has been discussed up to this point. It was seen in how teachers as Colombians see themselves in sameness in relation to territoriality, affection while they see others in difference. The following section will take the analysis further to show how essentialisation took place as part of teachers' description of educational practices.

More concrete examples, relate to what the teachers live in the school context as well as how they make sense of the translation of policies regarding essentialised racial and ethnic identity, form part of this next section.

## **Essentialisation and inclusion influencing the understanding of educational practices**

As discussed previously, teachers' perceptions of identity reflect the social structures that create boundaries and divisions among groups. It is not strange then that teachers create ideas of groups based on the already unfair structures and reproduce inequality without awareness. In the educational context, those perceptions of racial identity influence teachers to act vis-à-vis difference following the parameters of the system. A general observation in this regard is that with the intention not to be racist, teachers only find the option of assuming colour-blind attitudes. In addition to some examples I have already discussed throughout these two data chapters, this section is concerned with examining further examples of how whiteness-centred discourses and essentialisation of identities come to bear in teachers' understanding of educational practices.

The first instance I want to describe as reflecting essentialisation in practice is the case of inclusion represented in a football programme in one of the schools in this study. In this case, teachers perceive this football programme as a clear instance of enactment of policies of inclusion and they proudly refer to it as such. This is because the school programme seems to register predominantly Afro-Colombian students. [However, in accordance with Walton et al.'s \(2018\) ideas, the notion of institutional racism makes clear other relevant issues that are worthy of mention. For example, this attempt to promote inclusion paradoxically ends up reproducing discrimination.](#) The following is an example of how one of the teachers developed an account about this programme while we were discussing the existence or inexistence of 'race':

***Raul:** That is something that is there. Unfortunately, it is there, and that has changed a lot. And that has decreased a lot, and has changed a lot. But there is always that, that difference. For example, here in the school specifically, we have the sports groups. The school is outstanding in football. So, that is true, everybody knows that people of colour are very good at football. So, they are differentiated because of that. I mean, there is that difference. Without trying to say that this is bad. But there is that characteristic already. They are being*

*classified as “they are the football players”. As a consequence, they are the bad students. I mean, they are already labelled in that, hmm I mean, in that concept. So, there is a boy of colour, ok, you must be football player and academically you must be weak (flojo) and precisely, that norm is met.*

As can be seen in the excerpt, Raul first reflects how in his perception there is an essentialisation of Afro-Colombian identities in terms of biological abilities. He says “everybody knows that people of colour are very good at football”. With his testimony, the teacher reflects that not only does he essentialise them in othering, exoticised terms because he considers Afro-descendants different from others (physically and biologically) but he also ends up reproducing racial structures in an othering undermined fashion when he says that, consequently, “they are bad students”. He legitimises his belief by making a generalisation and further, as a “rule” that he thinks is “met”. Yosso (2005) reported that this attitude that undermines students’ intellectual abilities because of racial prejudice, usually leads teachers to develop deficit thinking (i.e. to think of students as being at fault for poor academic performance). [This reproduces discrimination which affects these children’s security and confidence \(Vincent, Ball, Rollock, & Gillborn, 2013\).](#)

The presence of the football programme in that school raises several questions. For example, why is that in Bogota, a city where only an approximate 1.49% of the population is Afro-descendant (DANE, 2005), a football programme created in a state school is found to have participants of predominantly Afro-Colombian origin. In further investigation, I found that the students are channelled by another governmental institution (at the level of family welfare) which brings them to this school. The mechanisms to enrol the students are unknown to me. However, it appears that this practice is the materialisation of a policy that is interpreted from the view of essentialised racial identities of Afro-Colombians. Therefore, teachers translate those policies by keeping interpretations that end up essentialising identities and reproducing practices that discriminate with or without consciousness. Several testimonies given by teachers, not only Raul, consider the football school a case of inclusion of ethnicities while essentialising racial identities that reaffirm prejudice. This is what I call a reproduction of discriminatory practices which unintentionally accompanies teachers’ actions.

Other cases in which the inclusion policy was translated into practice also showed how this essentialisation was carried out by teachers. For example, in the previous section

(othering undermined), Antony undermined his indigenous students and exoticised them by culturally essentialising them in the dominion of certain activities and the preference for wearing certain garments which seem to be fixed and unchangeable. In the last section of chapter 5, James also showed how he perceives indigenous children in natural disadvantage without questioning. From the perspective of CRT, this situation reflects the fact that, despite inclusion policies being created with the intention to ‘include ethnicities’, it seems that teachers’ lack of awareness and sensitisation of multicultural education keeps on maintaining the racial structures and reproducing fixed racial identities. This flaw affects teachers’ perceptions and reinforces oppression over marginalised populations. This is something that is also translated in educational practices. In this vein, Antony for example says: *“The curious thing is that these [indigenous] children have, regarding learning, they learn more slowly. I don’t know why”*. Furthermore, not only does this excerpt suggest that Antony cannot fully understand what happens with these students as part of their development in educational practices, it also indicates how epistemic violence affects the way this teacher could interpret the situation beyond a perceived weakness in the affected groups. He only partially understands the situation as CRTs would argue, consequently, it can be inferred that he does not know how to act with students. *Consequently, the students are marginalised because they do not receive enough attention, their identity is affected and any possibility to challenge structures is eliminated. Despite arguments of advancement facilitated to ethnic communities, students from those communities have to face the institutional racism that is involved in ‘their non-ethnic dominance’ (Ball, Rollock, Vincent, & Gillborn, 2013).*

Teachers seem to generally see the situation of race from a critical perspective. However, in line of what happens with the enactment of policies discussed in the previous chapter, they also seem to be unable to develop transformative practices. Consequently, they adopt colour-blind attitudes. This can be seen in the following example:

***James:** There are behaviours that make us be identified, let’s say to all races. Well, from history we have always known that the white people have always developed in the administrative and political areas, haven’t they? That the indigenous people, we have that conception that we have to change, that they are always the slaves or that they are useful only for humble jobs. And that the black one is lazy, and in that way, they won’t achieve to... let’s say that they*

*also have a slave connotation. Hmm. It has been difficult to erase from our conception, of our thoughts, that rooted cultural thinking that we have. But I have known about people that they have managed to demonstrate that they can go beyond the simple conception or the simple idea that has been shown to us from the culture itself.*

**Researcher:** *how do you approach this variety of students you have?*

**James:** *In the same way. Yes, because I think that this comes from the beginning from home. I don't, either underestimate or (ensalso) elevate because everybody for me is the same.*

James in this example shows a critical position about the essentialisation of identities in fixed undermined othering. This critical stance leads him to adopt a colour-blind approach: treat them in the same way because “*everybody is the same.*” In this position, as CRT would argue, there are dangers in taking this attitude. For example, it is paradoxical to see that colour-blind attitudes in teachers are frequently illustrated while some of them, such as Raul, also think that “*Afro-Colombians are better at football*”. In this sense, it is possible to say that the oppression of power relations that establish social structures plus a lack of sensitivity in educational policies develops reproduction rather than transformation of educational practices. This relation shows how the criticism made by critical race theorists (e.g. Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) with regards to colour-blind approaches in education makes sense. Teachers probably try hard to avoid racial discrimination by avoiding differentiation between students in specific practices in the classroom. Nonetheless, the fact that social relations are ingrained in racist structures makes it difficult for teachers to really deal with racial discrimination effectively.

In the previous examples, essentialisation happens because of the enactment of an educational policy of (ethnic) inclusion that is, in itself, essentialising racial identities and showing them as different to others. In addition to this, teachers’ attitudes towards race also shape their educational practices. In connection with the previous discussion, teachers choose silencing and silencing race is one of those attitudes that contributes to the preservation of unfair social racial structures. In this sense, teachers do not relate to race as an issue of their concern. They repeatedly expressed that they prefer the colour-blind attitude, as the topic “*is not really clear*”, “*is rude*”, “*is not nice*”, etc. These were some of the words they used to explain why they did not consider racial identity in their educational practices. This resonates with the discussion of epistemic violence

that was seen in chapter 5 in the section of white supremacy and policies. In this context, teachers expressed they prefer to prioritise values related to their own subject matters while local racial issues seem not to relevant or part of their interests.

In the same vein, teachers did not accept linkages with the idea of race since they reported not to believe in race. Therefore, they also feel that racism is probably exerted by others rather than by themselves. In this regard, from several descriptions it can be inferred that racism is believed to be part of students' interactions rather than teachers. *"I am not racist, but children are"* was a common opinion in this respect. In turn, intriguingly, Raul explained a situation when he saw a discussion between two students in which one of them was calling the other "black" offensively and he preferred to ignore the incident to avoid a bigger scandal. This avoidance [to address racist situations arises a paradox: by ignoring racist attitudes, racism is reinforced. This also shows how racism is only seen, as other critical race theorists have criticised, in acts of violence or aggression and not in subtle mundane attitudes towards others \(Leonardo & Norton, 2014\).](#) From the view of CRT, this is a reduction of the problem which is structural and needs to be revised as such rather than simply as aggression in singular practices which do not really show the whole picture and later action cannot provide any transformation (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2004).

Last but not least, I want to refer to another form of educational practice that deals with culturally essentialised identities of Colombians. As reported above, teachers tend to construct a culturally essentialised view of national identity. Therefore, their educational practices seem to be extremely connected to those views. They link national identification with the recognition of Colombian territory and natural resources as well as the appreciation of habits and traditions that they perceive as typical of Colombian culture as seen in the following example:

***Researcher: How do you teach students to be Colombian?***

***Tomasc: ish, Oh my God! ~ How to teach my students to be Colombian? ...Colombian as such, well. I have never reflected about how to be Colombian, but I have taught them to know their land, to see their hometown and in this I have found in the immersion lessons I have found a very big problem. We are looking at the diversity of Colombia and then, we are...#we are talking about, "tell me what departments of the Caribbean region you know" edh, Choco [gestures showing confusion]. And, "are you Colombian?" [Same gesture of confusion]. But they do not know about Colombia. So, trying to***

*talk to them sometimes, you ask them, and ask, what kind of fruit is this. And they say: Hmmm! No idea, warm or cold land? Hmm. They don't know. Nothing.*

Several teachers said that they try to teach students to be Colombian by showing them beautiful places and different kinds of food of the country as shown in Thomasc's case. We can also see that even if he mentions his interest in the diversity of the country, his discourse is reduced to the geography and foods that are representative of the country with no major reflection on social aspects that give sense to identity formation such as race seem to be unimportant.

As can be seen in the examples given, teachers' perceptions of racial identity are affected by the social structures that are represented in the power relations embodied in institutions such as policies and media and which at the same time, essentialise and sustain racist practices. This leads me to discuss the following topic, in which teachers try to find an escape from racial discriminatory structures by relating national identities in a renovated cultural essentialisation of national identity.

### **New ways of culturally essentialising national identity shaping educational practices**

Colombian identity, as has been discussed so far, seems to be essentialised in teachers' perceptions in cultural features that creates the idea of Colombian identity as monocultural. This is in agreement with what Barker (1981, in Rollock, Gillborn, Vincent, & Ball, 2015) has characterised as cultural racism, a situation in which some groups are subordinated as inferior based on their life styles. In this subordination, concepts such as citizenship, immigration and nationhood play the role of typical race labels (black, white, etc). This section refers to that essentialisation but it also reflects on how neoliberal discourses have also contributed to regenerating nuances of Colombian identity. After reflecting on how these nuances have shaped new views of identity, a reflection on what teachers consider as educational practices based on those discourses is presented. Drawing on CRT, but mainly on postcolonial studies which establish that neoliberal discourses rely on old power relations that maintain some with privilege while others are marginalised, the ideas developed in this section are the basis to argue that those new constructions of Colombian cultural identity reproduce rather than transform racial structures. Postcolonial theorists such as Castro-Gómez (2005) and

Mignolo (2000) have referred to this as ‘blood cleansing’ in which power of knowledge has re-semantised values in economic structures.

### **Neoliberal discourses and new Colombian identity**

Coming back to the discussion of the role of media in the configuration of racial identities appeared to have in the previous chapter, in my study, there is enough evidence in the data to suggest that the essentialisation of identity based on cultural characteristics has been spread in media through the language of commercialisation (production and consumption) (Embong, 2011). Mignolo (2005) discuss this phenomenon as a new mantra of human development which based on the corporative language has developed an ecology of human production and competition. I will explain this case by referring to the following example where Martin is commenting on how he sees Colombians have been represented in the media:

***Martin:** No, no. I am going to give you an example. The worst example I can give you is something that was called “Colombia is passion”. In this country, we understood that that had to do with strength (berraquera) and bravery but in other parts of the world, they thought it had to do with something sexual. When you express yourself in front of the others you need to know how to do it. So, we are represented very badly. And this, (\*), the TV reporters, everybody. That is the problem of the, the Latins. When the reporters present themselves, everything is their appearance. And that distorts the idea of whether they are intelligent or not. Just the example of Sofia Vergara herself. She can be the most intelligent reporter in the world but... [gestures opening his eyes and changing her tone of voice] the world sees her from another perspective!*

As can be seen in the excerpt, in contrast with the previous form of essentialisation of national identity, this new essentialisation does not focus on territoriality or cultural traditions. This kind of essentialisation stands infected by elements of advertising and the recreation of features that fictionalise racial identities which are entangled in the world of spectacle and celebrity. As seen in the criticism made by Martin, this identity seems to rely on those mottos that have been used to lead the campaign promoting a new image of Colombians. In this case, the teacher stands a critical position about this. However, going back to dysconsciousness derived from media, Martin also legitimises the objectification of this Colombian identity when he says, ‘*that is the problem of Latin people*’. Despite those new views of racial identities that appear to have been organised



to develop a more positive image of Colombian people, as can be inferred from the previous example, it is also seen that this idea of cultural identity has triggered the acceptance of negative practices that devalue human experiences. This is specifically suggested in the way cultural stereotypes about Latin-Americans support the objectivation of women and sexism, as implied by Martin when referring to Sofia Vergara (a Colombian model and actress that has been successful in the USA). He mentioned the exploitation of women's bodies and the exaggeration of physical appearance for marketing purposes.

Following the ideas of Castro-Gómez (2005b), the neoliberal discourses that have been expanded through media in the frame of globalisation, like the ones presented above, are articulations that resemble old discriminatory practices because they maintain old relations of power. According to him, old empires dominated through religion, however new ones continue dominating through the expansion of capitalism and its new forms. The media industry as explained by Van Dijk (1993) is an example of how neoliberalism plays an important role in shaping people's perceptions of racial identity, as seems to be the case in this study. Martin, as a representative of the audience of this publicity, shows how powerful these discourses can be and how they might shape subjectivities.

From another perspective, teachers, seem to have been optimistic in accepting and essentialising themselves in these types of new discourses involving renovated cultural racial stereotypes. Antony's words are a useful example of this:

***Antony:** ...And if you are in another place in the world, and they speak about Colombia, everybody associates it with party, salsa and...It is true. It is true! I have my experience, and being abroad, because of dance I could get me into the right places thanks to dancing...*

Following his experience abroad, this teacher felt that national racialised identities seem to be positive rather than negative when being associated with exoticised dance and tropicity. From his perspective, this experience helped him to socialise and enter social spaces that he did not have the opportunity to inhabit before and that was why he considered it a positive experience. However, recalling the discussion in the previous section, exoticisation reinscribes discriminatory discourses (Bradbury, 2013). In concordance with what has been discussed throughout this thesis and from the theoretical view that composes this study, racial structures have changed but they have not been transformed (Castro-Gómez, 2005b). Castro-Gomez (2000) maintains that

neoliberal discourses have added characteristics to identities that have made them change their features, however power relations maintain the power in the same structures. In this regard, it is probably useful to recall that...

External differences become the bodily manifestation of internal characteristics, attitudes, and beliefs which are seen as immutable and fixed and which are inseparable from notions of (white) superiority and (black) inferiority (Hall, 1992 as cited in Knowles & Alexander, 2005, p. 10).

Following Hall, the teacher in this case produces cultural fixation of Colombian people qualifying himself in tropicality, which he regards as a positive aspect. However, this is reproducing structures in which those features appear essential and I would say, undermining them as suggested by Mirza (1997); Louis (2005); Hooks (1992) and others in relation to these ideas of exoticisation. In turn, cultures are seen as monocultures and individuals are trapped in new racist discourses that generalise and do not give space for individual experiences (Weedon, 2004). Since those essentialised stereotypes put cultures at risk to be naturalised in aspects of moral and cultural difference, they also keep affected groups in the margins, susceptible to the objectification of the unfair system (Louis, 2005). On the other hand, this practice reinscribes structures in the old hierarchical relations of (white) superiority and (non-white) inferiority, configuring identities like the Colombian one in epistemic violence. The following participant makes this point evident by positioning himself as non-white and a thinking aloud of the way he feels as a Colombian struggling internally to fight the epistemic violence that locates him in inferiority maintaining power through regimes of truth.

*Omar: I don't know if the Colombian person is very humble or very foolish. I have the feeling that when we have a person from another country, we feel they are better than us. To believe that there is another person who comes from abroad, with a different language, with different characteristics and a way of acting which is different and to think that that person is better than me...that has been more or less my personal experience with a foreigner.*

As in this case, the participant is dealing with racial structures but he also assumes they are natural (Rollock, Gillborn, Vincent, & Ball, 2015). The new discourses erasing racial identity with their emphasis in essentialisation do not seem to be changing this view, they seem to be working as a mechanism of reproduction in which white is

affirmed as superior while non-white is affirmed as containing characteristics of the exotic from the perspective of white.

### **Educational practices under new cultural essentialisations**

Teachers' explanations in relation to Colombian identity reflect that these discourses of new cultural essentialisation are strong and appear to shape their educational practices fuelling racist discourses that are reproduced unwittingly. As they reported, teachers seem to use those **references** noted above to guide their students and develop a sense of identity. In doing so, they tended to refer to the exaltation of Colombian celebrities who have achieved global success in order to increase a sense of Colombian belonging. The singer Shakira, football players like James Rodriguez and several sports people are the most popular names teachers use to talk of pride in Colombian identity. In a first case, teachers do it when they consider these characters as example of success, or in a second case, when teachers make them part of lesson content as a source of motivation for their students to learn. This is suggested by Antony when he tries to convince students to learn the foreign language (his subject) and follow examples of sports stars or singers like Shakira who have a positive image and have improved their social standing by speaking other languages.

***Antony:** I make this as an example with my students. When we beat Uruguay in the championship of Brazil, Juan Guillermo Cuadrado was interviewed and he answered all the questions in 10 minutes in Italian. I said to the students, see, see where he grew up. He is probably earning a lot of money because of football but he also knows how to speak another language. This is also more attractive for women. And if you see Falcao, he plays for Chelsea. And he gives interviews in English, something that Faustino Asprilla or Pibe Valderrama didn't do.*

As displayed in Antony's example, addressing Colombian identity in his educational practice involves a combination of neoliberal elements that have arisen from celebrity life and publicity. Consequently, he thinks that this has to be incorporated in his teaching as a positive guide to students towards a renovated views of Colombian identity. However, he is not aware of the moral dimension that sustains these celebrities in a place of recognition. [As a critical race theorist, Louis \(2005\) is suspicious of celebrities that are glorified in their exoticism as part of the neoliberal market. For this author, these glorifications usually follow the same racist parameters of a system that fixes racial identities in abilities that undermine intellectual capacities.](#) Like this kind of

teachers' educational practice, it was found that some other teachers trigger identity constructions based on great contemporary events such as the football world cup. These teachers give relevance to rituals such as wearing the Colombian T-shirt to support their football team and they also foster the need express their love for it. As well as Louis (2005), other CRTs believe these efforts in identity formation follow the same path of reproducing uneven racial structures because they recreate an implicit exoticisation in terms of the abilities students can produce. For example, teachers use ideals of fame and wealth to encourage students to set their life goals without awareness of the undervalued moral of their intellectual skills. Teachers immersed in the neoliberal dynamics facilitate the reproduction of identities which extend epistemic knowledge in inferiority confused in neoliberal discourses of progress.

The ways those discourses reproduce uneven structures are involved in a network of new relations that form what is finally represented in teachers' educational practices. In this view, the language of commercialisation in media also works in parallel with neoliberal discourses that have transformed education to be developed in the frame of marketing and competition as has been discussed by Gillborn and Youdell (2009); Leonardo (2002); Libreros (2002). These neoliberal underlying principles are strongly influenced by whiteness-centred approaches to policy that also have framed the concept of development and this has been entangled in discourses of education at different levels. This network of relations appears to shape teachers' perceptions and their practices by triggering commercial discourses that tend to dehumanise and promote individualisation and competition. This is partially seen in Antony's intervention above when he refers to whiteness-centred ideas represented in the speaking of the English language as an element of prestige that validates sexist behaviour such as attracting more women. In this respect for instance **Hilda** says:

*"I want my students to create enterprise, I want them to be able to create business and become the boss."*

This conception of progress is what seems to shape teachers' ideas of their educational practice. Nonetheless, in terms of how these dynamics reproduce structures, Castro-Gómez (2005b); Escobar (2005) and others outline that development in terms of progress by the acquisition of profit and technological advance has been an invention from the west and has, in certain ways, hampered a definition of development from another perspective (Said, 1976; Spivak, 1988). In this context, notions of development that characterise the non-western countries are relegated, strategies keep on trying to be

alike the dominant culture and therefore epistemic violence keeps on being reproduced in practice.

Another example of these neoliberal discourses which align with white supremacy, reproducing unequal relations, is presented in Hilda's perceptions too:

*Hilda: ...I always say [to students] that it is important the way you wear your clothes. Because that is something you live, I live it every day. If you don't go to a bank with high heels and there is another woman who goes well-dressed, she passes in front [of the queue] and you hmm [turned her eyes and sighed showing impotence]. And it happens. I think, No! that is not going to happen, but it happens...*

*when you apply for job. [The boss says] "Ok, but you have to look nice, ok?" (Yo vere bien bonita no?). So that affects, and that happens. In Colombia, it happens.*

Following the ideas of postcolonial theory (Castro-Gómez, 2005b), this strategy intersects with class to maintain white supremacy in the racial construction of educational practices. In this case Hilda keeps on reminding students of the importance of the parameters of dressing well, to get a job and feel able to compete with others. The most interesting element embedded in Hilda's extract is the way she constructs contradictory values using physical appearance to align her pupils to the parameters of the dominant culture. These mechanisms contribute to what was already pointed out by Wetherell and Potter (1992) as mechanisms of normativisation that define the usual while the opposite is seen as deviant and exceptional. Since

“the rituals of recent times [of globalisation and neoliberal tendencies] centre on self-regulation and the production of docile bodies ordered and made product in institutional settings such as the army, the factory, the prison, etc” (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 83), the individuals do not find any other option than accommodating to the system.

With regards to the economic organisation of these dynamics, Castro-Gómez (2005b) and Apple (1995) have pointed out, the global economy has transformed the old economic structures, but that does not mean that structures have disappeared. On the contrary, the new economic systems seem to be more flexible and structured differently but they remain the same. Therefore, racial structures aligned with global neoliberal discourses have experienced a similar evolution. On the one hand, neoliberal dynamics have created new resources (e.g. dressing, language) for individuals to overcome racial

structures as reported by Rollock et al. (2015). On the other hand, these dynamics have preserved the structures whilst masking them by the discourse of economic success. In brief, those new essentialised cultural ideas are now more linked to the open world of globalisation whilst preserving the power in the capitalist (white) elites. This relation to power is embedded in teachers' perceptions which with their support are reproduced in educational practice.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has focused on the analysis of the construction of racial identity(ies) in teachers' educational practice focused on the micro-level. The analysis suggests that these constructions are also affected by the same power relations that are embedded in policy and media, as discussed in chapter 5. Hence, the teachers in the study tended to construct essentialised views of racial identity that are fixed in asymmetrical relations. This is how in their self-racial identifications, teachers seemed to invoke a position of privilege. From this position, teachers tend to develop perceptions of others 'in difference'. Specific descriptions of how those constructions crystallised illuminate how discriminatory practices can occur without teachers' awareness.

Some of these essentialisations specifically relate to how sameness unifies national identity in cultural features while it also separates other groups under the same criteria. This view of identity usually comes with simplification of the complexity involved in identity (Weedon, 2004). By scrutinising specific aspects of territoriality this element is identified as prominent. In more concrete aspects of racial identity, undermining and exoticisation emerge as forms of othering. These kinds of essentialisation also appeared to shape teachers' descriptions and understanding of their educational practices. For example, in the way they described their interactions with indigenous students or how they described them in fixed identities. Typically, children of perceived racial groups were described in terms of difference, which I argue additionally undermines them as humans with equal opportunities in relation to the rest of the students. Therefore, they are fairly related to the rest of the Colombian community. Othering, in this case, draws on those communities' inequality and sustains the unfair structure in the predetermination of social roles and socio-cultural understanding of their reality.

As part of teachers' illustrations of racial identity, Colombian national identity emerges in teachers' narratives as an antidote to former prejudice towards 'racial' groups. This

appears to be, however, a regeneration of other sorts of generalisations that further essentialise Colombian identity. In this vein, the racial identity of Colombians reported by teachers preserves the idea of homogeneity with no colour difference while contradictorily the darker skinned colour and indigenous peoples are seen as different or invisibilised (Clarke & Garner, 2009; Telles & Flores, 2013; Wade, 1995). Finally, Colombian identity is also articulated with new features (e.g. commercialisation) as a result of the influence of media, globalisation and neoliberal discourses. From this kind of configuration, teachers ironically also believe they develop practices of resistance. However, because of the lack of awareness of racial structures and the links with marketisation, this apparent resistance ends up working for the same mechanism of racial inequality (Wetherell & Potter, 1992).

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

#### Introduction

This thesis has explored the ways racial identities in Colombia are constructed in teachers' perspectives of educational practices from a multi-level approach. In order to approach the phenomenon, CRT, whiteness and postcolonialism were combined and used as a theoretical framework. CRT and whiteness specifically provided analytical tools to broaden the understanding of racial identity formation in the context of Latin-America that postcolonialism has previously considered. Underpinned by these theories, I have argued that although racial identity categories are believed to have disappeared in Colombia in the search for less discriminatory practices, the data suggest that these racial categories continue to be present and are manifested in teachers' perspectives of educational practices. This is evident for example in the tendency to see racial identities as fixed in educational practices as well as in the fact that, in the struggle to be less discriminatory, ironically, teachers end up reproducing racist structures.

One key suggestion derived from the data analysis is that teachers are highly affected by power relations that stimulate them to unwittingly rely on racist structures even though they seem to try hard to fight the discriminatory system. In this study, policy appears to be a significant source in shaping teachers' perceptions in relation to racial identity construction not only on what they state but also in the mechanisms that are used to make it work. In this regard, different forms of discrimination were evident in teachers' perceptions of racial identities and educational practices. Drawing on the findings, in this final chapter, I argue that it is necessary to develop stronger mechanisms of educational policy making and delivery that go hand in hand with media production to develop more effective spaces of reflection for teachers, students and whole communities. This work should also be accompanied by the unlearning of imagined communities which have been shaped historically by stereotypes, prejudice and disdain (Castro-Gómez, 2005b; Giroux, 1997; Hall, 1990; Weedon, 2004). To this end, there should also be a range of possibilities that show alternative ways of interpreting reality which can work as the basis for the communities to reach conscious understanding in



terms of identity and the increase of agency more coherently related. Finally, these changes are important but they can do little if social inequality and structural (racial, economic, social) discrimination pervades and there is no conscientisation about it.

This chapter starts by highlighting how racial structures represented in a white supremacy system seem to greatly influence perceptions of identities and educational practices, as suggested by the teachers in this study. In doing so, I argue that those perceptions provide testimony of the constraints of educational practices in the frame of policy making and delivery; and how the media supports racial power relations by producing images of white elites situated in privilege and commoditise white-like identities. I then explain how teachers' perceptions of racial identities reflect discriminatory practices that affect their understanding of reality as well as how they also reproduce them in the educational field unconsciously. I end by suggesting some areas of change as well as possible ideas for further research.

With this analysis, this study links race and education and contributes to fill a gap in scholarship on educational practices in Colombia. As said before, this is an underexplored area of research in Colombia where studies on race are few and just recently they have mainly focused on ethno-education. This study considers the impact that race has on mainstream education as well as how educational practices are impacted by racial structures.

### **Unequal structures shaping racial identity in educational practices**

Thanks to the multi-level approach to educational practices that I have proposed in this study (see chapter 3), it was possible to determine through teachers' perceptions that power relations shape their understanding of racial identities and that those constructions are also supported in what they perceive in policies. With this approach was also possible to understand that the way teachers perceive media supports their understanding of racial identity working mainly at the level of representation but supported by mechanisms at the level of production. A significant discovery from the way policies shape teachers' discourse of racial identity has to do with the way teachers identify themselves and how those identifications attempt to mirror statements from policy (see chapter 5). Teachers' educational practices seem to be largely influenced by the demands of education policy. Despite the fact that they are wary of dominant discourses in policy making and delivery, external factors (such as institutional

organisation, their role in schools in terms of policy) trigger their application of policies uncritically. A similar observation was found in the exploration of their perceptions of the media: although teachers believe themselves to be in opposition to and rejection of the use of media generally in their lives, especially to TV and soap operas, as audience members they end up using media that they consider more neutral (e.g. newspapers) without consciousness of their dominant racial discourses. In this section, I discuss each of these specific points in detail.

### **Educational policy as white supremacy**

In general, macro discourses – usually the ones embedded in national policies – seemed to play an important role in teachers’ identity formation. It was found in this study that the teachers tended to mirror the discourses of policy and align their beliefs to them (see chapter 5). While this alignment seems to be more politically correct, it can be argued that policies in this case are adopted uncritically without much awareness of their implications. This was suggested in the findings as teachers tended to adhere their identity descriptions to an emphasis on cultural aspects detached from social and political explanations. In relation to educational policies, something similar appeared to happen. As has been suggested by other studies (e.g. Ball et al., 2011; Gillborn, 2006), teachers’ compliance to policies has been generally found (e.g. Ball et al., 2011; Wilkins, 2015), and the finding was replicated in this study. This compliance was found to be propelled by the lack of spaces of critical reflection that teachers seem to have. It can be inferred that teachers in this study had the intention to be critical and the desire to propose alternative views or discussion to policy. However, those desires appear to be limited since they do not have time or space to have a critical discussion. Considering these limitations, teachers end up going back to the premise that policies are ‘*important*’ statements which do not really need to be discussed (see Martin in chapter 5) or complying because of pressure from colleagues (see Hector in chapter 5). Not only as a researcher but also as a former teacher, I can draw on teachers’ accounts to say that neoliberal discourses in policy nowadays often reaches educational institutions in hermetic packages without instructions, which teachers seem to interpret in practice without any process of sensitisation. Policy in this way plays a very significant role because teachers become subjects of policy (Ball et al., 2011). That is, teachers are not only constrained in their practice by what the policies state but also by the mechanisms that lead them to simply attempt to apply and comply with them.

The restricted conditions of interpretation of educational policy bring relevance to the study of identity in teachers' educational practices too. This study suggests that the adherence to policy without critical reflection implies two dangers that teachers seem to live: i) the transformation of their role into that of technicians. This leads them to consequently undervalue their professional knowledge and ii) the production of discriminatory practices towards students (which undervalues students' performance, as their objectives are usually contrasted with a dominant culture which furthermore is alien to them) (see chapter 5). Chiefly developed in the context of education guided by globalisation in the country, these restricted conditions of policy interpretation end up leading to the exertion of discriminatory practices towards teachers and students, subsidising the reproduction of unfair structures. In agreement with Castro-Gómez (2005b), this context of globalisation shows that power is more flexible and more difficult to locate but structures remain the same. Under the lens of postcolonial academics such as Said (1976), Spivak (1988) and Rizvi et al. (2006) this is, unfortunately, the destiny of educational practices due to the fact that education as a social institution that contributes to the mechanism of unfair relations maintaining the status quo.

Stating the conclusions above in the context of Colombia might be considered harsh because the government has insisted on portraying globalisation as a lifesaver to change the country's poor economic conditions (MEN, 2013) causing people to perceive it in the same way (see Antony's account in chapter 5). In relation to the global economy and Colombia's more marginal position within it (in socio-economic terms), teachers keep hope of changing the world by motivating their students to value education and the potential of increased individual effort (as evident in Hilda's accounts in chapter 6). In this sense, some of the participants were aware of discrimination in education (see Marioc in chapter 5) but at the same time, they remained confident that recognition of the value of education and the promotion of individual effort is the only way to change an unjust reality. As stated by **Antony** "*[pupils] in low strata dream about having money ... They are very motivated by that*". However, this position is counterproductive because, while they try to motivate the students to change their reality, they are in fact reproducing the system. It is likely that this particular conclusion is hard for teachers to accept, precisely because they are a part of this reality. Nevertheless, a reflection on this issue may **bring about and introduction of the analysis** of educational practices by encouraging teachers to consider the nuances of discrimination that are currently ignored.

In relation to specific policies that deal with racial identities, findings also showed that power relations embedded in policy and curriculum shape teachers' constructions of both their own and others' racial identifications. In coherence with the claims of CRT as well as those in postcolonialism, these constructions of identity are also fuelled by an unfair system that has been historically developed, in which some groups have been negatively affected while others have been in positions of privilege (see chapter 2). Since the time of colonisation to today those structures continue to be reproduced under the development of international alliances and the requirements that those alliances entail (see discussion in chapter 5). This confirms what Leonardo (2002) and postcolonialists such as Castro-Gómez (2005b) argue as the expansion of whiteness (racial structures) through globalisation and global alliances affecting other countries worldwide.

As discussed in chapter 5, the whiteness-centred discourses and practices that operate in educational policies seem not to work differently in policies related to racial identity (e.g. inclusion and ethno-education). Teachers are meant to be recipients of policies and they are expected to simply apply them. In fact, the way these policies work seems to be aligned with what Ball et al. (2011) call 'imperative' policies, which demand immediacy without much reflection. Teachers as part of the institutional organisation try to put those policies into practice but as policies are often not reflected upon, teachers end up reinscribing dominant colonial discourses of superiority and inferiority.

In general, the mechanisms of power developed in policies reflect what Gillborn (2006) has called the dominant force of whiteness, which appears to be embedded in both discourse and mechanisms of policy practice. Whiteness or white supremacy in this case is the racial structure that has governed educational practices since the colony has been suggested by Wade (1995) and others (e.g. Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2004). In this sense, educational practices which consciously consider racial identities appear to have changed the categories of race description but not the practices which affect the different racial groups, as has been suggested in studies made by Ng'Weno (2007) or Omi and Winant (1993). From racialised identities of black, indigenous and white (in colonisation) to mestizos (in independence) and from mestizos to pluri-culturality (nowadays), Colombian identity(ies) seems to have maintained asymmetric relations that divide local groups. This implies that Latin-American territories are full of "internal colonialisms that contradict real integration" (Bello & Rangel, 2000).

In this context, this unequal system has put its faith in education as the mechanism to change the perpetuation of discriminatory practices (Rizvi et al., 2006). However, under the light of this study, discrimination seems to be reproduced in educational practice rather than being radically changed by it. This is due to the fact that teachers, as social actors, are also affected by the structures of social organisation. It can be argued that in the teachers' accounts there was hope when they expressed the need to reflect and be critical. Thus, this means they just need to be given the opportunity to be able to do it. However, this space for reflection does not necessarily guarantee to mend the symbolic and material discrimination that some groups have suffered. As I suggested before, there is a need for structural transformation to achieve a real change. It will always be unfavourable to change imaginaries of marginalised groups when most of these minorities are still in disadvantage (Banton, 2002; Young, 2003). Referring to structural changes is what leads me to the discussion in the next section: the media in the understanding of racial structures operating in the unconscious perspective towards 'other' groups.

### **White supremacy and the media**

In my study, the media, as perceived by teachers, appeared to influence educational practices in two senses: i) in the construction of visual imagery, which influenced their perceptions of racial identities and ii) in the construction of views of social reality through their contents, especially in the presentation and reading of the news. Similarly, to the case of policies, teachers are suspicious of the 'unbiased' information provided in media and because of that, they restrict the access that they have to it and the way they use it with their students. Nevertheless, they seem to miscalculate the dominant discourses of 'race' that the media brings through different kinds of information that is displayed in any format as well as the power relations embedded in media production (see chapter 5).

For teachers, accessing the media only happens to keep themselves informed about current affair. Therefore, as racial structures that the media embed are not openly seen and teachers, they seem not perceive them when approaching the information, they access to. Nevertheless, several examples in which teachers described their images of racial identities, they reflected that those ideas usually came from TV for example, revealing that visual imagery does play a role as a dominant discourse (see chapter 5). In fact, teachers' testimonies reflected that media do not only seem to perpetuate

asymmetric views of racial identity but also that images usually reflect parameters of physicality and beauty which highlight whiteness superiority (see discussion in chapter 3).

In media production, teachers were quite critical and therefore they expressed a preference for news rather than soap operas or celebrity shows. In contrast to the studies made by Van Dijk (1993) (see chapter 3), teachers in this case seemed to focus more on the local (national) news, a finding which may lead to the conclusion that whiteness-centeredness does not affect their perceptions. However, taking white privilege as a theoretical tool, as well as considering the same analysis made by Van Dijk (1993) in white elites and media production, it is possible to see that teachers perceive Colombian 'white' elites as perpetuating power through their legacy in the production of the news. This was seen in teachers' suspicion towards news production (see Irene's testimony in chapter 5). However, this suspicion is not consistently considered by teachers because the news still tends to have a level of authority and 'neutrality' for them. Since this connection of media and power does not have as direct an impact on teachers' educational practice as policies, teachers did not consciously relate examples of whiteness-centred discourses in terms of their own access to media or the impact on their educational practices. However, in their answers, it was suggested that media seem to play an important role in teachers' constructions of racial identities. On the one hand, it appears to be reproducing fixed ideas of racial identities, and on the other hand, seems to be elevating features of whiteness. Therefore, it can be argued that the media play a role in shaping teachers' perceptions and, in turn, these perceptions may shape their practice.

### **The influence of teachers' perceptions of racial identity on their understanding of educational practices**

As was suggested before, my analysis showed that teachers perceive that media and policies influence their perceptions of racial identity (ies) in asymmetrical relationships where white appears to be superior (chapter 5). This understanding at the same time seems to influence teachers' educational practices in different ways: i) in how they see the students of 'racialised' groups fitting in the context of schooling; ii) in how they consider educational practices addressed to these groups; iii) in the way they engage in

non-discriminatory practices iv); and in the way they address educational practices to their students in general as part of the Colombian community, as discussed in chapters 5 and 6. Aspects related to historical continuities of discrimination as well as influences of commercialisation were evident as taking a crucial role for the development of practices of identity essentialisation and reproduction (see chapter 6).

The influence of power relations in teachers' perceptions of racial identity were reflected first and foremost in the way teachers perceive themselves (as Colombian mestizos or pluri-cultural) in relation to others. From this view, the data suggests that teachers described themselves from a view of privilege. This happened by categorising themselves out of such a racialisation, more advanced and more urbanised in contrast with the description of others who seem to be more marginalised, disadvantaged and disregarded. In this same line of thought, teachers tended to essentialise not only the others' identity -othering- but to also essentialise their own identity based on cultural factors such as territory (as linked to people's behaviours), food and religion. However, these essentialisations seem to work differently in each group. In the former case, these factors appear to support othering by undermining and exoticising cultural features of the ones who are different. In the latter case, these cultural features are part of the description of sameness (see chapter 6).

In the field of educational practices, the essentialisation that appears to take place in teachers' perceptions shapes what they understand or do in their educational practices. This process appears to be enhanced by the development of similar discourses circulating in educational policies that have used cultural essentialisation strategically to describe groups in difference (see discussion in chapter 6 and chapter 2 in relation to policies of ethnisation). This study suggests that teachers' essentialisation makes them see students of 'racialised' groups as different and odd not only in their physicality and clothing but also in the way they act (see Antony's account in chapter 6). Teachers also seemed to understand students of these groups as naturally disadvantaged which consequently creates pre-conceptions of their learning capacity (see Raul in chapter 5). On the other hand, these ideas of racial identity also raise concern about those teachers who do not know how to tackle situations in which the ethnic minorities appear to be in a different learning level (see Antony's account in chapter 6). Besides, teachers showed that their perceptions of fixed racial identities seemed to happen in contradiction to their desire to be non-discriminatory. While teachers seem to have a colour-blind attitude towards 'racialised' students, some of them ambiguously reaffirmed biological features

of 'race' or cultural racisms (see chapter 6). In this way, teachers showed that colour-blind approaches are inefficient as claimed by CRTs such as (R. Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Finally, the same desire to become less discriminatory makes teachers preferentially promote national identity over racial identity when explicitly teaching students about a sense of belonging. This result has two unfortunate consequences: i) it undervalues the fact that racial discrimination and disadvantage become blurred and that it further produces partial understanding of reality and, ii) it shows an overreliance on cultural features that are also superficial while flexibility of identities seems to be disregarded.

### **Identity formation and education: proposals for a transformation**

This study focused on teachers' perceptions of educational practice to examine how power relations represented in media and policies could contribute to the configuration of racial identity(ies). As this study suggests, the case of identity formation goes beyond the walls of classroom experience and therefore it deserves to be considered more broadly by understanding educational practices in parallel with other actors such as media and policy. This approach acknowledges that people identify themselves with groups based not only on what they learn at school or what their teachers provide implicitly or explicitly as part of their teaching but also from what they learn from other non-formal sources. In consonance with other studies (e.g. Gillborn & Youdell, 2009; Leonardo, 2002; Sleeter, 2004), in this research I argue that it is necessary to acknowledge that racial identity configuration is imbued in conflictive historical issues of discrimination and inequality. Hence, here I highlight the impossibility of explaining issues of racial identity without referring to that historical mapping of discrimination (Bonnett, 2000).

**Considering** the complexity in the configuration of racial identities in educational practices that was analysed in this study, I think there are some areas in which education might contribute to changing the uneven history of identities in Colombia. Some of these proposals are inspired by my own understanding of the thesis and the theories involved, while others are influenced by the contributions that critical pedagogy that previously noted by Solorzano and Yosso (2001) have already noted as closely related to the principles of CRT (e.g. in their interest in education for social justice, or their interest in interdisciplinary work). Other contributions are derived from multicultural education (in the interest of incorporating multicultural understanding to practices and



curriculum content) (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2004) as well as the insights gained by alternative or public pedagogy (in the understanding of education beyond the institutional) (Giroux, 2011).

Firstly, an important point concerns a more conscious understanding of national identity that has been stated as pluri-cultural as well as what that means for education. As the data suggests, pluri-cultural policies, as well as other educational policies, lack sufficient spaces for critical reflection according to teachers. Following this idea and what other authors have claimed in their studies (Ng'Weno, 2007), it seems that the process of policy development has been poor and delivery has been centred on producing documents rather than changing practices. In the revision of the literature of ethnicity and ethno-education in the country, there is useful material that has been generated to incorporate multicultural elements in the national curriculum. Those documents are not reported here because of lack of space in this thesis (e.g. “La catedral de estudios Afrocolombianos”, 2004). Nevertheless, the data suggests that there is little work in discussion about or understanding of these documents by teachers in general practice. As already noted, one of the main reasons for this situation is that there are not spaces or clear mechanisms for the teaching community to consider these materials. It follows that, by creating those spaces which allow real work on reflection, critical awareness would be increased as well as a better understanding of the social reality of the country. Raising the importance given to context and the understanding of power relations is one of the main endeavours of critical pedagogy (Freire, 2000; McLaren, 1997).

A second proposal for transforming the situation is related to the need to find spaces to reflect on policy so teachers can ‘make policy’ (Ball et al., 2012) rather than just follow policy guidelines (as was expressed by Hilda in chapter 5). A useful way to change this reality would be by altering the understanding of policy production. Ball et al. (2012) make very clear that policies are discourses that do not stand by themselves in documents. Policies require interpretation and translation. Moreover, interpretation is mediated in translation by different policy actors. This understanding of policy production would change practices of educational policy that, according to teachers, have been carried out inadequately as they seem to be mostly imposed rather than reflected upon.

From another viewpoint, it seems that teachers' discontent with policy needs to be taken seriously not only because they made explicit that they are not provided with the space to talk and express their ideas, but also because, as has been stated in other studies (e.g. Gillborn, 2006), the restrictions that are executed by the institution favour racial structures that sustain an unfair system. By the same token, there is a need to reflect beyond the constraints of economic factors that affect teachers' educational practice to understand also the sources of knowledge that shape it (R. Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Gillborn & Youdell, 2009). Based on this, spaces of knowledge creation are also necessary to help teachers deal with performative models that transform their intellectual work beyond that of technicians.

Recognising that education does not work by itself and that, as this study suggests, media is a strong influence on identity formation, it would be of help to increase collaboration between policies and media in order to highlight the representation of difference in a multicultural world that reflects less the essentialisation and instrumentalisation of culture. This should be accompanied by pedagogical alliances between media and schools to develop more educative programmes in which students can understand both how some communities have been constituted in disadvantage, as well as how media plays a role in representing those realities. To avoid the fixation of identities it is necessary to develop a historical approach that also tackles the groups' development and transformations rather than perceiving history as facts (Bernasconi, 2001).

Drawing on the need to develop alternative views of reality as has been claimed by postcolonial theorists, teachers should be educated to understand that identities are not free choices, but that they are constrained in different ways. This should be a possibility for students who are part of different communities (especially the ones that are ethicised) to associate their identification with aspects of recognition and understanding of wider constructions. I argue that it is necessary to offer affected populations an education that offers not only the possibilities of recognition, but also an education that extend possibilities to frame a future with new aspirations based on those possibilities. This would be attainable by increasing understanding of diversity of who the people are and their position in the reality in which they are to offer a communitarian improvement.

As part of the development of these projects mentioned above, in conjunction with media, academic communities should be benefited by the dismantling of stereotypes, prejudice and disdain that has historically shaped groups in marginalisation while others have also gained privilege. As part of this understanding, there also should be analysis of the neoliberal elements that have featured identities in marketisation. The understanding of these elements should be tools for critical and political engagement with the transformation of the reality in which the population has been immersed (Young, 2003).

Finally, as suggested previously, even if these changes can be of a great help to change the uneven reality of the country, efforts would not be enough if there is persistence of inequality and injustice. There is a need to make a real change, something that is only achieved by provoking a structural change. This primarily involves action by the government at the local level by investing more in local human development. It appears that investment to date (cultural, economic and political) has largely been made to achieve 'international standards' rather than to strengthen local capital (as advocated in this study). In my opinion, investment should be re-directed to improve the local circumstances which will then give chances of Colombia to occupying its own place, stronger in the global sphere. Without this, efforts in education will always change but not dramatically transform the unfair reality of groups that have lived marginalisation and in disadvantage.

### **Further implications**

The general work of this thesis contributes to the field of education since race is an area that has not been sufficiently explored in Colombia. It brings together aspects of racial formation, identity and the intervention of different actors as part of that formation. One of the central areas in this study focuses on providing an alternative view of education going beyond the analysis of educational practices if they work in isolation in the formation of pupils. It is clear here that educational practices are complex and that the intervention of other sources such as media and policies play a crucial role for teachers in making sense of what they consider including in their teaching and how they make it happen. This is more prominent as those sources are places of power relations that affect teachers both consciously and unconsciously. Therefore, one of the main reflections of this study concerns the necessary collaborative work required to channel educational efforts. As stated before, the changes made in policies are not enough if

there is not enough reflection about the way they are produced and implemented. At the same time, it is not enough to change policies and practices if the media does not work educationally to generate discourses that go beyond commercialisation and the production of rating figures. Equally, it is not enough that policies and media work towards the elimination of structural inequality if economic, social and racial inequality pervades in marginalising one or another population. This study makes explicit that the construction of racial identity is constituted within power relationships that keep some groups in disadvantage and that affect teachers as well as other populations to reproduce practices of discrimination.

### **Further research and limitations**

As mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, the field of study of race and education has been underexplored in Colombia. In this context, this project opens a range of possibilities to further research. This is actually the beginning of a long path that can contribute not only to formal education in the formation of racial identity(ies) but also to the awareness of alternative forms of education. Alternative education referring to media that nowadays takes place outside the classroom and becomes part of more individual and practical experiences of education. Having made that clear, while I explain some of the limitations of this study, I also refer to some of the many areas of study that I consider are envisioned as a result of what happened in this thesis.

As mentioned before, the study of the use of media in connection with educational practices has not been commonly made. Usually educational practices are studied in the 'institutional' field as part of the schooling space (see discussion in chapter 2 and 3). Since we now live in a visual era due to the fact that new technologies project images that have increased influence on people (Embong, 2011), my study attempted to understand, in this case, **how the media is an important component that complements** educational practices. Despite the fact that teachers' self-reporting through interviews gives limited information about how they interact with media as audiences, it was helpful to make explicit their role as agents in that interaction. This approach also helped to see more clearly how unconsciousness (or better posed as dysconsciousness (see chapter 3)), works even when teachers feel they are being resistant to dominant discourses embedded in it. The limitations that the interview format brought would probably be tackled with further research using ethnographical ways of working. This would allow more participation of the researchers in acknowledging other participants

of the educational practices as well as an understanding of the contextual conditions involved not only in the school but also in the surrounding community.

This study focused on teachers taking themselves as a central point of struggle between the tensions that power relations exert over perceptions of racial identities and educational practices. The reason to make this choice of using teachers as the central point of struggle was addressed to understand how teachers' educational practice played a role in the formation of racial identities. Although the study has been enlightening in that sense, it was also seen that in the view of CRT, foregrounding the voices of teachers who identify themselves as part of marginalised groups would probably provide a wider picture of how the situation of racial identity(-ies) is experienced in education. Equally, this would allow a more comprehensive understanding by adding areas of intersectionality. Therefore, more research in that area would be useful in understanding the relationship between race and education and the general situation of race in Colombia.

Following the previous point, teachers were also the focus to establish how racial structures appear to shape their educational practices. This emphasis helped to underline invisible structures to consider areas of professional agency. As I mentioned in chapter 5, some of the data suggested teachers developing agency but this was an area that was not reported in this project due to its lack of linkages with its emphasis on structures. Perhaps, this aspect of teachers agency in relation to race and education can represent a valuable aspect for further research.

Similar studies with different populations would also widen the panorama. This study focused on state school teachers in Bogota, which provided a general picture of the regular prototype of Colombian people, middle class, urbanised and 'racially' mixed. It would be interesting to see the results of a similar study made, for instance, in elite schools to understand how teachers' position themselves and their students in whiteness. This would complement, confirm or invalidate the insights derived from this study.

Another study could focus on the students who, as well as teachers, are influenced by educational practices and media. In this case, the focus on the interaction with policies would probably lessen while learning experiences would be foregrounded. However, pupils' role as audiences of media and their agency with meaning creation in relation to representations of racial identities in Colombia would still be a relevant part of the analysis and could be a point of comparison with this study.

The theoretical framework stated in this project provided useful tools for understanding the situation of disadvantaged groups and how that was related to the field of education. Other theories or other positions of the same theory would probably provide more tools in order to unearth elements of resistance in educational practice. I would highlight (Yosso, 2005) proposal in this sense with her model of cultural wealth which integrates other elements for this purpose. Although I did not pursue that line of thinking in my work, it would be interesting and necessary to develop a research project to understand the paths that communities in disadvantage follow to overcome, in the frame of education.

Finally, it would be very interesting to develop this study again, with a focus on the understanding of educational practices rather than in the construction of racial identities. This would enlarge the aspects of performativity, discrimination and production of culturally essentialised identities imbued in marketisation that came out as hints from this study for further research.

As discussed in this study, racial identity in Colombia seems to be involved in colonial continuities that circulate in institutionalised discourses of education and media which are also reproduced by people. Despite the transformation that has been lived through policy, inequality and asymmetrical relations appear to pervade, so there is a need to continue researching the area to find new possibilities to achieve further transformation. The possibilities outlined above could be the start of such a transformation.

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## Appendices

### Appendix N. 1: Interview guide

This is the first of two interviews that are part of the research you have agreed to participate in. Once again, I assure you that all the information provided here will be confidential and that it will be used for research purposes only. The questions are not designed in order to gain true or false information but, you are strongly encouraged to think and talk about your personal experience on the topic.

The interview will take the form of an informal conversation in which the following issues will be addressed. However, we may discuss other issues arising as the conversation develops.

#### Micro-levels of educational practice

##### *Teaching practice itself*

##### **1. Personal history**

1. Mr/Mrs ———, I know you are a teacher of (subject of specialisation), please tell me more about yourself.

Relevant information will include:

- A brief description of who you are
- Your family background and hometown
- Academic background of yourself and of your family up to date
- A typical day for you, more frequent activities and ways of spending free time.

2. According to what you have just said, could you please tell me a little bit more about your family?

- Their special traditions, beliefs, and ways of thinking and behaving
- How would you think these traditions, beliefs and patterns of thinking and

behaving are related to a specific region, or ethnic group?

- How would you describe the ethnic or racial background of your family and to what extent do you identify with those characteristics now?
- How do you feel your family has influenced your teaching career?

3. Do you think your ethnic or racial background has an influence on your teaching now? If so, how?

- Can you give me an example of that?

4. In your view, what identifies a Colombian person?

- How could Colombians be described racially?

Some people say that they would like to live in a different country, some others say they would have liked to be born in a different country, to what extent would you agree with those ideas?

- If you had the chance to live in a different country, which country would you choose? Why?

## ***2. Professional history***

1. During your teacher training, which were your major sources of inspiration to develop your career (people, circumstances, events, etc)?

2. During your teacher formation, did you have any training concerning issues of diversity and race? Can you give me some details about it?

## ***3. Philosophy of teaching***

1. What do you think your mission as a teacher in the country is?

- How do you think these thoughts would be different if you think of education in



another country? Provide examples if possible

2. To what extent are issues of race and diversity concerns of your practice?
3. What expectations do you have for the future of your students? To what extent your teaching would play a role in achieving those expectations?
4. Can you describe the profile of a Colombian citizen that you would like your students to achieve as a result of their education?

- Can you describe a particular case that has influenced your thinking on this matter?
- If you had models of people that you think students should follow, who would you pick and why?

#### **4. Practice**

1. How do you see education of Colombia in the global panorama?
2. Some people say students in Colombia do not have an appropriate level to compete with students of other countries, to what extent do you agree with this view?
3. In your opinion, what would be necessary to increase education quality in order to position Colombia at the global level?
4. Can you describe the material that you use for your lessons (contents, emphasis, etc)? Can you also talk about the criteria to choose that material? How do you use that material with students?
5. Do you have any particular group of students that work better than others? If so, why?
5. Do you celebrate the race day at school? How do you do it? Can you tell me one that you particularly thought was meaningful and why?
6. In your area, what would you think should be the contents that are more important to include in the curriculum? How do you generally address them with students?
7. What do you feel would be the ideal job for your students when they finish their studies?

## **Macro-levels of educational practice**

### ***Policies and curricular organisation***

1. What education school or national policies are you familiar with? What opinion do you have about them?

2. The National constitution of Colombia recognises the country as pluricultural, and that there should not be racial discrimination. How do you think these ideas are reflected in the dynamics of your institution? Do you have any anecdotes regarding this point in your own or other colleagues' experiences?

➤ Are there any particular education policies that you take into account to integrate racial equality in your practice, if so, which one?

3. Schools usually have meetings to discuss the goals of the government in education. Can you describe the objectives and contents of one of those meetings you have taken part in?

➤ What are some of the common topics of those meetings?

➤ How have those discussions been integrated in your teaching practice?

5. One of the goals for education of the current president is to increase results in exams to make our country competitive at international standards? What do you think about this?

➤ How do you think this will contribute to the population of your school?

➤ How do you think Colombian students would reach those goals?

## **Meso-levels of educational practice**

### ***Other social actors involved in Social interaction, the media***

1. Who are the people other than members of your family you mostly interact with?

- Who do you get along better with? Why?
- To what extent do you consider these people may influence or support your teaching, why?
- Have you ever discussed issues of race or diversity with them?

2. How much contact do you usually have with media? (Social media, newspaper, radio, television). What do you usually use them for? What kind of information do you access with it?

- Do you ever consider them in your lessons or are they only part of your personal life?
- If you consider them, how exactly do you make use of them? Could you tell me about a particular example when you felt you could use the media for your lessons? (How did you make use of them?)

### C. Racial identity experiences

1. Some people say there is no racism in Colombia. What is your opinion about it?
2. How do you describe yourself racially? why?
3. How would you describe ethnic groups in Colombia?
4. Can you describe any racist scene you have witnessed?
5. Do you think race is a topic that has been taken into account in education? If so, how?

## Appendix N. 2: Participant information sheet

ENGLISH VERSION



### **University of East London**

Stratford Campus, Water Lane, London

### **University Research Ethics Committee**

If you have any queries regarding the conduct of the programme in which you are being asked to participate, please contact:

**Catherine Fieulleateau, Ethics Integrity Manager, Graduate School, EB 1.43**

**University of East London, Docklands Campus, London E16 2RD**

**(Telephone: 020 8223 6683, Email: [researchethics@uel.ac.uk](mailto:researchethics@uel.ac.uk)).**

### **The Principal Investigator:**

Sandra Ximena Bonilla Medina. [Ximenabvonilla@gmail.com](mailto:Ximenabvonilla@gmail.com). Mobile +44 771 847 5656

Advised by the Director of Studies (DOS) Dr. John Preston [j.j.preston@uel.ac.uk](mailto:j.j.preston@uel.ac.uk) and  
Dr. Charlotte Chadderton [c.chadderton@uel.ac.uk](mailto:c.chadderton@uel.ac.uk)

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in this study.

### **Project Title**

*EdD. RESEARCH PROJECT: RACIAL IDENTITY IN TEACHERS' EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE IN THE CONTEXT OF COLOMBIA*

I would like to invite you to participate in this research project which forms part of my EdD research. You should only participate if you want to; choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in anyway. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully

and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

### **Project Description**

This project is about exploring constructions of racial identity in teachers' educational practice. The study seeks to understand how Colombian state school teachers' perception of educational practice is affected by policies of education and cultural pedagogies (both apparently highly influenced by globalisation). On this basis, your participation will involve answering questions about race in Colombia, your own racial identity and possible experiences or racism.

### **Confidentiality of the Data**

Participants involved in the study will include high school teachers of state schools in Bogota-Colombia.

Participation is voluntary. You do not have to take part. You should read this information sheet and if you have any questions you should ask the researcher. You should not agree to take part in this research until you have had all your questions answered satisfactorily.

If you accept to take part of this research, you will be given this information sheet to keep and will be asked to sign a consent form. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the project at any moment. You may also decide to withdraw the data provided before it is processed. As a participant in this research, you will be required to take part in a narrative interview. In the interview, questions are addressed to personal experiences rather than providing universal knowledge. In other words, your answers do not imply true or false answers but illustrations of your lived personal experiences. The interview will approximately be 45 minutes each. Since those answers might involve very personal information, anonymity will guarantee your integrity. In the case that modifications to these conditions are deemed necessary, a follow up consent form will be used for you to approve continuity or withdrawal of taking part in the project.

Since the group size for sample collection is small, your confidentiality will be guaranteed. Everything will be anonymised and you will not be recognisable in any publications resulting from this study.

Any previous relationship you have had with the researcher will not have impact at all on your current position since there are now no institutional links between the two parts. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw the unprocessed data should you chose to do so.

There are no foreseeable risks in participating in the study. Nevertheless, if you consider that information is sensitive at any point of the project and you do not wish it to be published, you are free to withdraw your participation or specific comments.

There are no direct benefits to taking part in this project. However, in the long term, the information I collect in the study attempts to analyse how educational practices are being developed in the light of the general aims of education in Colombia. The outcomes of this study also look for understanding how those educational practices contribute to the formation of Colombian cultural identity so that it helps to identify weaknesses and strengths to improve the quality of education. By being participant in this study, I will provide you with a summary of a final report describing the main findings and conclusions.

No data will be accessed by anyone other than me and my supervisors; and anonymity of the material will be ensured by using false names. No data will be available to be linked back to any individual taking part in this study. All recordings of data on audio equipment will be deleted after transcription. If you ask me to withdraw your data at any time before the project is finished, I will remove all traces of it from the records.

The development of this EdD project is being funded by an agreement between Pearson Foundation and Distrital Francisco Jose de Caldas University. For further information visit: <http://www.udistrital.edu.co/> and <http://www.pearsonfoundation.org/>

I will produce a final report summarising the main findings, which will be sent to you. I also plan to disseminate the research findings through publication and conferences in Colombia and internationally.

The arrangements described above are all subject to legal limitations. Data generated in the development of the research will be retained by the University in accordance with the University Data Protection Policy.

If participants have any concerns about the conduct of the investigator or any other aspect of this research project, they should contact [researchethics@uel.ac.uk](mailto:researchethics@uel.ac.uk).

This research has received approval from the UREC (University Research ethics committee).

**Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering taking part in this research.**

VERSION EN ESPANOL

## REGISTRO DE INFORMACION PARA LOS PARTICIPANTES



### Universidad del Este de Londres

Stratford Campus, Water Lane, Londres

Comité de ética de la investigación de la Universidad

Si tiene preguntas con respecto al desarrollo del programa en el cual está formando parte, por favor contacte a:

**Catherine Fieulleateau, Ethics Integrity Manager, Graduate School, EB 1.43**

**Universidad del Este de Londres, Docklands Campus, Londres E16 2RD**

**(Teléfono: 020 8223 6683, Email: [researchethics@uel.ac.uk](mailto:researchethics@uel.ac.uk)).**

### **Investigadora principal:**

Sandra Ximena Bonilla Medina. [Ximenabvonilla@gmail.com](mailto:Ximenabvonilla@gmail.com). Móvil +44 771 847 5656

Asesorada por el director de estudios (DOS) Dr. John Preston [j.j.preston@uel.ac.uk](mailto:j.j.preston@uel.ac.uk) y

Dra. Charlotte Chadderton [c.chadderton@uel.ac.uk](mailto:c.chadderton@uel.ac.uk)

El propósito de esta carta es provisionar toda la información que Ud. necesite considerar para decidir si participa en este estudio.

### **Título del Proyecto**

***Proyecto de Doctorado: Identidad racial en las prácticas educativas de los profesores en el contexto de Colombia***

Me gustaría invitarlo a participar en este Proyecto de investigación que forma parte de mi Doctorado en Educación. Ud. debe formarte del mismo solo si Ud. Desea. Si no desea participar, no habrá ningún efecto negativo de ninguna manera. Antes de decidir si quiere participar, es importante que entienda por que la investigación se hace y que significa que Ud. forme parte de ella. Por favor tome un tiempo prudente para leer la siguiente



información cuidadosamente y discúptala con otros si así lo desea. Pregunte si hay algo que no encuentre claro o si quiere ampliar la información.

### **Descripción del proyecto**

El estudio busca entender como las prácticas educativas de los profesores han sido impactadas a lo largo de la historia y hasta el día de hoy por las políticas educativas en pro de la globalización, y como estos procesos han impactado la identidad racial colombiana. Su participación en el proyecto incluirá que Ud. responda algunas preguntas con respecto al racismo, a su propia identidad racial y sobre la identidad racial colombiana.

### **Confidencialidad de los datos**

Los participantes que formen parte de este estudio serán profesores de bachillerato de colegios públicos en la ciudad de Bogotá-Colombia.

Su participación es voluntaria. No tiene que tomar parte en el estudio si no lo desea. Debe leer muy bien esta información en este formato y hacer las preguntas pertinentes al investigador si así lo requiere. No debe formar parte en la investigación hasta que no tenga todas sus dudas resueltas.

Si acepta formar parte de esta investigación, tendrá este formato con toda la información para que lo guarde. Después debe firmar un formato de permiso. Su participación es voluntaria y es libre de retirar cualquier clase de datos no procesados antes de que sean suministrados. Como participante en esta investigación, se le solicitara contestar una entrevista de tipo narrativo. En esta, las preguntas se dirigirán a obtener experiencias personales más que conocimiento universal. Es decir, sus preguntas no implican respuestas falsas o verdaderas o correctas sino ilustraciones que dejen ver las experiencias que ha tenido en su vida. Estas entrevistas duraran aproximadamente 45 minutos cada una. Debido a que esas respuestas suministran respuestas de tipo personal, la anonimidad garantiza su integridad. Un permiso de seguimiento será usado en caso de alguna modificación para que sea aprobada su continuidad o retiro en su participación en el proyecto.

Debido a que la población es pequeña, su confidencialidad será garantizada. Todo será anónimo y no se podrá reconocer nombres en ninguna de las publicaciones que se deriven de este estudio.

Cualquier relación previa que se haya tenido con el investigador no se verá afectada de ninguna manera con su posición actual ya que en el momento no hay conexiones institucionales entre las dos partes. Su participación es voluntaria y libre de retirar datos no procesados antes de su suministro.

No hay riesgos estimados en participar en este estudio. Sin embargo, si Ud. Considera que alguna información lo hace vulnerable en algún punto del proyecto y que no es conveniente que se publique, es libre de abstenerse a participar.

No hay beneficios directos en formar parte de este Proyecto. Aunque, a largo plazo, la información que recojo en el estudio contribuye a darle una explicación al cómo se desarrollan las practicas educacionales en el país a la luz de los objetivos nacionales de la educación. Los resultados de este estudio también buscan entender como esas prácticas educacionales contribuyen a formar identidad cultural colombiana.

Comprometiéndose como participante, le otorgare un resumen del reporte final de la investigación describiendo los principales resultados y las conclusiones.

Nadie tendrá acceso a los datos recogidos aparte del investigador principal y la anonimidad del material será protegida usando seudónimos. En su gran mayoría ningún dato se podrá relacionar con los individuos que forman parte de este estudio. Si pide retirar sus datos en algún momento antes de que se termine el proyecto, sus datos serán borrados y todo lo que se le relacione de los archivos.

Este proyecto de Doctorado está patrocinado por un acuerdo entre la Fundación Pearson y la Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas. Para mayor información, visite:

<http://www.udistrital.edu.co/> and <http://www.pearsonfoundation.org/>

Produciré un reporte final resumiendo los hallazgos principales que serán enviados a Ud. También planeo difundirlos a través de publicaciones y conferencias en Colombia y a nivel internacional.

Los acuerdos descritos anteriormente están dispuestos a limitaciones legales. Los datos generados en el desarrollo de la investigación se retendrán en la Universidad del Este de Londres de acuerdo con las políticas de protección de datos de la misma.

Si los participantes tienen preocupaciones acerca del conducto regular del investigador o de cualquier aspecto del proyecto de investigación, deben contactar a [researchethics@uel.ac.uk](mailto:researchethics@uel.ac.uk).

Esta investigación ha recibido aprobación del UREC (Comité de ética en la investigación Universidad).

**Muchas gracias por leer este formato de información y por considerar tomar parte en esta investigación.**

## Appendix N. 3: Consent form



ENGLISH VERSION

**UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**

### **CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN A DOCTORAL RESEARCH**

#### ***Ed. D. RESEARCH PROJECT: RACIAL IDENTITY IN TEACHERS' EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE IN THE CONTEXT OF COLOMBIA***

I have read the information leaflet relating to the above research in which I have been asked to participate and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researchers involved in the study will have access to the data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study which has been clearly explained to me and for the information obtained to be used in relevant academic publications.

Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Participant's Signature

.....

Investigator's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Investigator's Signature

.....

Date: .....

This project is developed as a requirement of the Doctor in Education program from University of East London (UEL). The main researcher is Sandra Ximena Bonilla Medina. [Ximenabvonilla@gmail.com](mailto:Ximenabvonilla@gmail.com). Advised by the Director of Studies (DOS) Dr. John Preston [j.j.preston@uel.ac.uk](mailto:j.j.preston@uel.ac.uk) and Dr. Charlotte Chadderton [c.chadderton@uel.ac.uk](mailto:c.chadderton@uel.ac.uk)



SPANISH VERSION

**UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**

**FORMATO DE PERMISO PARA PARTICIPAR EN UNA  
INVESTIGACION DE DOCTORADO**

***Proyecto de Doctorado en Educación: IDENTIDAD RACIAL EN LA PRACTICA  
EDUCATIVA EN EL CONTEXTO DE COLOMBIA***

He leído la información del formato de para los participantes relacionado con la presente investigación en la cual se me ha propuesto participar y se me ha dado una copia del

mismo. La naturaleza y los propósitos de la investigación se me han explicado y he tenido la oportunidad de discutir los detalles y preguntar sobre datos de la investigación. Comprendo lo que se me ha propuesto y los procedimientos en los que voy a formar parte se me han explicado.

Entiendo que mi participación en este estudio y que los datos de esta investigación permanecerán estrictamente confidenciales. Solamente el investigador principal tendrá acceso a los datos. También, se me ha explicado lo que pasara con la investigación una vez esta culmine.

Por medio de este formato, libremente doy mi consentimiento para participar en este estudio el cual me ha sido totalmente explicado al igual que se me ha hecho conocedor que la información obtenida será usada en publicaciones académicas.

Por medio de este permiso, entiendo que tengo derecho a retirarme del estudio a cualquier momento sin estar obligado a proveer ninguna justificación y sin repercusiones negativas para mí.

Nombre del participante (EN MAYUSCULAS)

.....

Firma del participante

.....

Nombre del investigador (EN MAYUSCULAS)

.....

Firma del investigador

.....

Fecha: .....

Este Proyecto se desarrolla como requisito en el programa de Doctorado en Educación en la Universidad del Este de Londres (UEL). La investigadora principal es Sandra Ximena Bonilla Medina. [Ximenabvonilla@gmail.com](mailto:Ximenabvonilla@gmail.com). Supervisada por el Director de Estudios (DOS) Dr. John Preston [j.j.preston@uel.ac.uk](mailto:j.j.preston@uel.ac.uk) y Dra. Charlotte Chadderton [c.chadderton@uel.ac.uk](mailto:c.chadderton@uel.ac.uk)

Interpretive repertoires	Initial categories
<p>27.47 Your identity</p> <p>R: how do you describe yourself racially or ethnically?</p> <p>A: can you give me an example?</p> <p>R: yes, some people say that there are indigenous, black people.</p> <p>A: ah ok. Actually I don't classify myself in a racial group. But because of history, I would say that we are all mestizos but...we do not really compare ourselves among groups, like I am mestizo and you are black. There some places where there is maybe this sort of classification and sometimes rude. But here in Bogota, I do not feel that. Ok. I do not feel I am included in any group. I consider myself as a Bogotan, I do not belong to any to afro-descendant community. I consider myself too urban (citadino). In any way, to live in Bogota is a different story from living in other parts of the country.</p> <p>R: why?</p> <p>A: Bogota is a metropoli, it has advanced more. Maybe in this concept of citizenship.</p> <p>R: Which one?</p> <p>A: The concept of neoliberal citizenship. Buildings, money, transport and work. So, definitely Bogota is another story compared with other Colombian cities or other little cities that we call towns. In that way, I consider myself too urban.</p> <p>R: How do you see that difference?</p> <p>A: For example, when you go to a city, like the capital of Tolima, Ibague. That is a small city. There is more poverty. There are many parts of the city in which there are no pave roads. The way of clothing maybe. The socio-economic level...there, there is more poverty and rich people are very few. If we make that difference. Schools, the general structure. And as in Colombia (sick) (Bogota) things are so centralised. The Ministries in Colombia, the narino house in Colombia.</p> <p>R: You mean in Bogota?</p> <p>A: All the politicians, in eh, sorry, in Bogota. In Bogota, everything is in Bogota. In other places, they are probably more abandoned. Maybe the main cities, Bogota, Medellin, Barranquilla and Cali. But none is close to the size of the city, and obviously to Bogota with so</p>	<p>Whiteness as property</p> <p>English language is a tool to combat the structural discrimination</p> <p>Teachers' life experiences of discrimination</p> <p>Not just language attitudes. National racialisation (discrimination). Attitudes towards racialised Colombian in the context of immigration in the USA</p>



## Appendix N. 4: Initial categorisation

## Appendix N. 5: Emerging sub-themes

Colour codes			
Most frequent theme	Second More Frequent theme	Third More Frequent theme	Outstanding theme
<b>RACIAL IDENTITY</b>			
<b>GENERAL IDEAS OF RACE</b>			
Multi-ethnic syncretic hybrid, however rejecting negative past belongings in colonial heritage (G)* (L) (R)		Contrary to G, he accepts his identity including the historical heritage (L). He qualifies it as an eclectic experience.  Acceptance and assimilation of the white heritage: religion. On the contrary, accepting his ignorance of indigenous and this is why he cannot portray himself as indigenous (R)	
Human beings = against race categorisation (H)*(M)		Colour blind attitude since his context has made him grow with all of them. however, he thinks other people do care about races (M). Avoid racism.	
Rejection of Human race or species, more adequacy in ethnicity, although not belonging to this second group (I)			
All humans same race (I) (M)*			
Cutting-edge transformation of human perception (I) *			
Local multicultural with region poles (J) (Mc) (M)* (R)		Multicultural with features of stereotype blackness. (M)  Although no necessarily with a pole, however implicitly in family heritage of boyacense and pastusa. (Taking stereotypes of the regions) (R)	

## Appendix N. 6: Emergent findings

Research question	Subquestions		NAME	OBSERVATIONS]	New EMERGENT FINDINGS
How is racial identity constructed by Colombian teachers in their understanding of their educational practices	1. What are Colombian teachers' perceptions of racial identity of the country?	1	Antony	<p>Colombia is a metropolis and there is acceptance of everybody. Nobody is different.</p> <p>Identified himself as mestizo, however not aware of the kind of mixture.</p> <p>Racism only happens in the regions. It is a matter of ignorance.</p> <p>Loves living in Colombia and would not change it.</p> <p>Static knowledge of geographic locations of races in Colombia.</p> <p>Races are different but in Colombia, people does not make a difference.</p> <p>Physical appearance is important in Colombia and every day is more.</p> <p>Racism exist in Colombia in discriminatory practices of rejection, language offense, and expressions of inferiority to different people. Class is a continuous variable of racism</p>	Racial identity is linked to territory and geography of Colombia, not to people
		2	Piedad	<p>Colombians are all similar. There is no difference.</p> <p>Identified as mestiza, not clear about her heritage.</p> <p>Racism does happen in Colombia</p> <p>Love Colombia, it is a good place to live.</p> <p>Colombian people are very kind, happy and they are good dancers.</p> <p>Static knowledge of location of races in Colombia. People believe in hierarchies of races.</p> <p>Absolutely physical appearance is a plus to be taken into account in Colombian opportunities.</p> <p>Racism does exist in Colombia and people use this as a way to oppressed the ones who have less power.</p>	They all believe there are not discriminatory practices, however they all think there is racism in Colombia

## Appendix N. 7 Findings in the light of theory

Findings in the light of theory	
Racial identities at a macro and meso levels of educational practice	<p>Whiteness in policies</p> <p>Dysconsciousness from policies and media</p> <p>Whiteness and structural discriminatory practices in teachers and students</p> <p>Globalisation and ways of white supremacy</p> <p>The impact of policies of race in educational practices</p> <p>Interest convergence</p>
Racial identities at the micro level	<p>White privilege in mestizo</p> <p>Essentialisation of identities</p> <p>Territoriality</p> <p>Undermining</p> <p>Silence</p> <p>Othering</p> <p>Culturalisation and racialisation in educational practices</p>

## Appendix N. 8 Transcription codes

[ ]	My additions
( )	Non-verbal language
CAPITALS	Emphasis
...	Silence
(*)	Broken sentence
(**)	unintelligible sentence
~	pause
<i>Italics</i>	lower voice
(Laughs)	laughs
[[ - ]]	Interruption
^	longer vowel
(2)	number of times a word is repeated
#	stuttering